



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



THURSDAY — 16 JUN 2022

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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	06/15 Extremists: 'open season' on pro-life
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/abortion-roe-scotus-kavanaugh/2022/06/15/id/1074649/
GIST	The Jane's Revenge pro-abortion extremist group declared "open season" Tuesday on pro-life organizations and facilities.

The organization, which has claimed responsibility for several fire bombings and vandalism at pro-life facilities from Wisconsin to Florida in the past month, issued the warning in a communique to [Abolition Media](#), "an online news source for revolutionary movements."

"You have seen that we are real, and that we are not merely pushing empty words," the [communique issued Tuesday](#) reads. "Your 30 days expired yesterday. We offered an honourable way out. You could have walked away. Now the leash is off. And we will make it as hard as possible for your campaign of oppression to continue. We have demonstrated in the past month how easy and fun it is to attack. We are versatile, we are mercurial, and we answer to no one but ourselves. We promised to take increasingly drastic measures against oppressive infrastructures. Rest assured that we will, and those measures may not come in the form of something so easily cleaned up as fire and graffiti."

The group further said that any "anti-choice" group or organization that does not "close their doors" or stop "operating" will be a "target" and that "it's open season, and we know where your operations are."

The warning comes while the [U.S. Supreme Court has not issued a final ruling](#) in a case that could overturn the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision, which made abortion legal in the nation.

The decision was expected Wednesday. In May, a leaked copy of a draft of the ruling pointed to the high court's overturning the decades-old ruling in favor of returning the issue to the states. However, despite issuing six rulings on Wednesday, the court ended the day without finalizing the controversial issue.

[According to The Daily Wire](#), the White House condemned Jane's Revenge and its warning.

"Violence and destruction of property have no place in our country under any circumstances, and the president denounces this," White House Assistant Press Secretary Alexandra LaManna told The Daily Wire Wednesday. "We should all agree that actions like this are completely unacceptable regardless of our politics."

The group's threat also comes less than a week after a California man traveled to Maryland to kill conservative Justice Brett Kavanaugh at his home because of the potential ruling.

The [Department of Justice announced Wednesday](#) that the man, Nicholas John Roske, 26, was indicted by a federal grand jury for "federal charges of attempting to murder a Justice of the United States, specifically, an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court."

About 20 incidents of vandalism, fires, and graffiti have been reported at pro-life facilities across the nation, including an attack with Molotov cocktails thrown into the office of a Wisconsin anti-abortion organization. The group [said it also participated in incidents](#) in Colorado, Massachusetts, Washington, [Iowa](#), New York, Texas, Florida, North Carolina, Oregon, and Washington, D.C.

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HEADLINE	06/16 WHO: Covid deaths start to rise
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/health/health-news/covid-19-death-who-global/2022/06/16/id/1074688/
GIST	<p>After five weeks of declining coronavirus deaths, the number of fatalities reported globally increased by 4% last week, according to the World Health Organization.</p> <p>In its weekly assessment of the pandemic issued on Thursday, the U.N. health agency said there were 8,700 COVID-19 deaths last week, with a 21% jump in the Americas and a 17% increase in the Western Pacific.</p> <p>WHO said coronavirus cases continued to fall, with about 3.2 million new cases reported last week, extending a decline in COVID-19 infections since the peak in January. Still, there were significant spikes of infection in some regions, with the Middle East and Southeast Asia reporting increases of 58% and 33% respectively.</p>

"Because many countries have reduced surveillance and testing, we know this number is under-reported," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said earlier this week. He said there was "no acceptable level of deaths from COVID-19," given that the global community now has the vaccines, medicines and diagnostics to stop the virus.

While many rich countries in Europe and North America have mostly dropped their virus restrictions, China's extreme COVID-19 policies have meant more mass testing, quarantines, and sequestering of anyone who was in contact with a case.

China's capital put school back online this week in one of its major districts amid a new COVID-19 outbreak linked to a nightclub. Residents in Beijing are still undergoing regular testing — mostly every other day — and must wear masks and swipe a mobile phone app to enter public places and facilitate case tracing.

China has maintained its "zero-COVID" policy despite considerable economic costs and an assertion from the head of the World Health Organization that the policy isn't sustainable.

This week, U.S. officials moved a step closer to authorizing coronavirus vaccines for the youngest children, after the Food and Drug Administration's vaccine advisers gave a thumbs-up to vaccines from Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech for children under 5.

The outside experts voted unanimously that the benefits of the shots outweigh any risks for children under 5 — that's roughly 18 million youngsters. They are the last age group in the U.S. without access to COVID-19 vaccines, and many parents have been anxious to protect their little children.

If all the regulatory steps are cleared, shots should be available next week.

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HEADLINE	06/15 CDC issues new guidance on monkeypox
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/national-international/cdc-issues-new-guidance-on-monkeypox-symptoms-as-us-cases-balloon/3736301/ https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/cdc-guidance-monkeypox-symptoms-us-cases-rcna33803
GIST	<p>The U.S. has reported 72 cases of monkeypox across 18 states in the last month, making it the country's largest monkeypox outbreak ever.</p> <p>That total has grown significantly since the beginning of June, when just 19 cases were confirmed.</p> <p>The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released new guidance Tuesday about how to identify monkeypox during this outbreak, based on the symptoms doctors have observed so far. Some recent infections have presented differently than past cases in Africa, where monkeypox is endemic in 11 countries.</p> <p>Traditionally, people with monkeypox have developed a fever, swollen lymph nodes, headaches and muscle aches, followed by a rash that starts on their face or in their mouth then spreads to other parts of their body — particularly the hands and feet.</p> <p>But in many recent U.S. cases, patients first experienced a rash in the mouth or around the genitals or anus. And instead of widespread rashes, some patients saw scattered or localized lesions in areas other than the face, hands or feet. In some cases, flu-like symptoms developed after the rash, but other people didn't have those symptoms at all.</p>

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The rash also seems to progress differently than in past cases. Monkeypox lesions usually start flat then become raised, after which they progress to fluid-blister, followed by pus-filled blisters that scab and fall off. But the CDC [said](#) Tuesday that among recent patients, lesions have appeared at different stages within the same area of the body. Fluid- and pus-filled blisters, for instance, may exist side by side.

What's more, some U.S. patients have reported pain in or around the anus and rectum, rectal bleeding, [proctitis](#) (painful inflammation of the rectum lining) or the feeling of needing a bowel movement even though the bowels are empty. None of those symptoms were commonly associated with monkeypox before.

The World Health Organization said Tuesday that it has also identified a unique pattern of symptoms among recent cases outside of Africa, including rashes limited to certain areas of the body like the genitals or mouth.

"It's now clear that there is an unusual situation, meaning even the virus is behaving unusually from how it used to behave in the past," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said at a briefing. Tedros [warned last week](#) that the window to contain the global outbreak may be narrowing, noting that the "risk of monkeypox becoming established in nonendemic countries is real."

On Friday, CDC director Rochelle Walensky said the U.S. needs to ramp up testing to keep up with the virus's spread.

"We must increase testing for those with a characteristic, pimple-like or blister-like rash so we can make swift diagnoses," she said in a briefing.

No deaths have been reported outside Africa in connection to the recent outbreak. The version of monkeypox that's spreading, the West African strain, has a fatality rate of 1%, according to the CDC.

The agency maintains that the risk to the public is low, but has asked travelers to practice enhanced caution and avoid close contact with sick people and wild animals, dead or live.

People who develop abnormal rashes or lesions should contact their health care provider, the CDC said, particularly if they meet the following criteria:

- Contact with a suspected or confirmed monkeypox case.
- Contact with someone with a similar rash.
- Recent travel to countries with reported monkeypox cases.
- Close in-person contact with men who have sex with men who meet partners through an online website, app or social event.
- Contact with dead or live wild animals or exotic pets that are endemic to Africa, or a product derived from such animals.

	<p>People with flu-like symptoms and one or more of these risk factors should self-quarantine, the CDC said. If a rash doesn't appear within five days, monkeypox can likely be ruled out.</p> <p>Because cases can resemble chickenpox, herpes or syphilis, anyone who develops lesions associated with those illnesses should also be checked for monkeypox, the CDC said. If a doctor prescribes a treatment for a sexually transmitted infection and the patient does not respond, that's another indicator a test is warranted, the agency added.</p> <p>The CDC advises people who test positive for orthopoxvirus, a category of viruses that includes monkeypox, to isolate until their scabs have fallen off and a fresh layer of skin has formed. Monkeypox symptoms usually last two to four weeks.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 The Great resignation to forced resignation
SOURCE	https://www.marketwatch.com/story/from-great-resignation-to-forced-resignation-tech-companies-are-shifting-to-layoffs-after-a-huge-ramp-up-in-hiring-11655308264
GIST	<p>The Great Resignation is pivoting to a Forced Resignation.</p> <p>Thousands of layoffs in the tech sector, compounded by hiring freezes and a slowdown in hiring, highlight the abrupt shift in fortunes over the past several months as a result of rampant inflation, fear of stagflation and recession, supply-chain interruptions, the war in Ukraine, an ailing stock market and other red-alert economic factors.</p> <p>The latest blows came Tuesday, when Coinbase Global Inc. announced an 18% layoff of about 1,100 people and real-estate brokerage Redfin Corp. said it would reduce head count by about 470 people, or 6% of its workforce.</p> <p>“Everybody needs to batten down the hatches. We are in stormy, stormy seas with choppy weather on the horizon,” media titan Jeffrey Katzenberg, a board member and investor in cybersecurity startup Aura, told MarketWatch.</p> <p>In recent weeks, a broad cross-section of companies across all sectors have announced layoffs or plans to limit hiring amid the economic crucible. In addition to Coinbase and Redfin, Peloton Interactive Inc., PayPal Holdings Inc., Tesla Inc., Carvana Co. and others said they intend to slash staff. At the same time, some of tech’s biggest players — Facebook parent company Meta Platforms Inc., Intel Corp.’s client-computing group, Microsoft Corp., Uber Technologies Inc. and Lyft Inc. — are slowing down or freezing hires.</p> <p>All told, at least 15,000 tech-related jobs have been or will be eliminated, according to Layoffs.fyi, a website that tracks job cuts at startups.</p> <p>Downturns in spending on PCs, tablets and advertising have only added to the tumult, and there are whispers that even cloud-computing — which led a wave of internet expansion the past decade — could be flattening. It’s all contributed to a convulsive shift from hiring binge to belt-tightening, especially among startups.</p> <p>“It’s been a challenging last three years with the pandemic, and another two coming with secular [economic] headwinds,” Starz Chief Executive Jeffrey Hirsch told MarketWatch.</p> <p>The effect has been most pronounced among Silicon Valley startups, say local economists. “With the uncertainty of recession, a slowdown in short-term demand and possibly more rate hikes, understandably there will be a pause for startups and, for in the short term, for the really big players,” Stephen Levy, director and senior economist of the Center for Continuing Study of the California Economy, told MarketWatch.</p>

Diminished prospects and a balky market have already delayed the IPO dreams of startups. For larger companies, the impact is more subtle. Major expansion is still on for Google in Mountain View, Calif., and San Jose, and for Meta in Menlo Park, Calif., and nearby Moffett Park, but it remains to be seen if they will fill those facilities with people as quickly as originally planned. “It may take them longer, perhaps 12 months, before things pick up again for big tech,” Levy said.

Representatives from tech’s largest companies are mostly mum on their hiring plans, though Amazon.com Inc. said it is aggressively adding staff. “With tens of thousands of corporate and tech roles currently available, we continue to look for talented individuals to help us build the future of retail, robotics, health care, devices, cloud computing, and more,” Amazon spokesperson Kelly Nantel told MarketWatch.

For now, Big Tech is taking a beating in market valuation. The market cap aggregate of about 300 publicly traded tech companies with operations in San Francisco and the valley is at its lowest now, \$9.98 trillion, since 2013 after peaking at nearly \$15 trillion in November 2021, says Rachel Massaro, vice president of research at the Silicon Valley Institute for Regional Studies.

“There is certainly a confluence of things that are making everyday life difficult,” Massaro told MarketWatch. “That is a huge impact trickling down to companies, management, and the hiring level.” [The unemployment rate in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties, in the heart of the valley, is at a 22-year low of 2.05%, though that could change if layoffs pick up and hiring clamps down.]

Like nearly everyone else, cybersecurity startup Aura is closely monitoring costs and bracing for a challenging macro-climate “for years” between inflation, war, supply-chain issues and a post-COVID climate, Aura CEO Hari Ravichandran told MarketWatch. “This is impacting the entirety of the business ecosystem,” he said.

Adding to the economic uncertainty: Demand for PCs and tablets are headed for their worst decline in several years, according to a new forecast from International Data Corp. Global shipments of traditional PCs will fall 8% year-over-year to 321.2 million units in 2022 — the steepest drop since 10% in 2015. Meanwhile, worldwide tablet shipment forecasts were lowered to 158 million, down 6% from 2021 — its worse percentage decline since 10% in 2018.

“We feel very confident that the commercial PC market will remain stronger than the consumer and education markets,” IDC analyst Ryan Reith told MarketWatch. “But it will not match the growth surge during the pandemic in 2020 and 2021. The challenge remains inflation, the war in Ukraine, a lockdown in China, and some lingering supply-chain issues.”

Global cloud sales, meanwhile, are expected to grow at a relatively modest 20% to \$494.65 billion in 2022 from \$410.9 billion a year ago, according to market researcher Gartner. The forecast is for sales to grow 21% to \$599.84 billion in 2023, and 20% to \$720.99 billion in 2024.

Another dynamic is the whip-saw-like impact of COVID on job security at companies that greatly benefited from the hyper-growth days of the pandemic, when homebound Americans splurged on streaming, gaming and social media.

After spending the better part of two years ramping up on content and people while it amassed millions of new subscribers, Netflix Inc. has imposed layoffs in recent weeks. Last month, it internally said it was laying off about 150 employees, including some in the executive ranks and in the animation division, which account for about 1.3% of the company’s 11,300-person workforce.

The jolting circumstances at Netflix and elsewhere represent a jarring turn of events for employees who were jumping from one high-paying gig to another — sometimes, within a matter of months, say jobs experts.

	<p>“It was certainly a candidates’ market the last couple of years,” Marty Reaume, chief people officer at Sequoia Consulting Group, told MarketWatch. She said 459 business leaders representing mostly California-based tech companies disclosed in March 2022 that more than 20% of their workforce left their jobs in 2021. The national average, by comparison, is about 15%.</p> <p>“The curve couldn’t go up forever” of “frenetic hiring” and “rising salaries,” Reaume said. “It was getting a little ridiculous scouring for talent. If there is any benefit to this crazy market, things will settle down a little bit.”</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 China calls: will support Russia on security
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/06/15/asia/china-support-russia-security-xi-birthday-putin-intl-hnk/index.html
GIST	<p>Hong Kong (CNN)Chinese leader Xi Jinping reiterated his support for Moscow on "sovereignty and security" matters in a call with counterpart Vladimir Putin on Wednesday, upholding his backing for the countries' partnership despite the global backlash against Russia's invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>Speaking on his 69th birthday, Xi also pledged to deepen strategic coordination between the two countries, according to China's Foreign Ministry.</p> <p>A separate readout from the Kremlin said the two leaders stressed their countries' relations were "at an all-time high" and reaffirmed their commitment to "consistently deepen the comprehensive partnership."</p> <p>The call is thought to be the second time the two have spoken since Russia invaded Ukraine. They last spoke just days after Moscow launched what it insists on calling a "special military operation."</p> <p>China, too, has refrained from referring to Russia's actions as an invasion and has walked a fine line on the issue. It has portrayed itself as calling for peace and upholding the global order, while refusing to denounce Russia's actions. It has also used its state media apparatus to mimic Kremlin lines blaming the United States and NATO for the crisis.</p> <p>During Wednesday's call, Xi stressed China had always "independently assessed the situation" in Ukraine and called for "all parties" to push for a "proper settlement of the Ukraine crisis" -- echoing language he used in a March call with US President Joe Biden.</p> <p>China is "willing to continue to play its role" in promoting a "proper solution" to Ukraine, he said.</p> <p>The Kremlin's summary of the call took this position a step further, saying: "the President of China noted the legitimacy of Russia's actions to protect fundamental national interests in the face of challenges to its security created by external forces."</p> <p>China's lack of censure for Russia's war in Ukraine has further strained Beijing's tense relationship with the US and its allies.</p> <p>US officials have repeatedly called on countries to condemn Russia's actions and warned their Chinese counterparts against aiding Moscow. During the March call between Xi and Biden, the US President spelled out consequences if China gave material support, following US intelligence that Moscow asked Beijing for military assistance -- a claim both deny.</p> <p>Trade ties Wednesday's call was also a chance for Putin and Xi to check in on a growing trade relationship.</p> <p>Earlier this year, weeks before the Russian invasion, the two leaders in a face-to-face meeting said their countries had a "no limits" partnership and pledged to boost trade.</p>

"Since the beginning of this year, bilateral relations have maintained a sound development momentum in the face of global turbulence and transformations," Xi said in the Wednesday call.

"The Chinese side stands ready to work with the Russian side to push for steady and long-term development of practical bilateral cooperation," Xi said, pointing to the "steady progress" of their trade ties and the opening last week of the first cross-border highway bridge over the Amur River.

The two agreed to expand cooperation in energy, finance, manufacturing and other areas, "taking into account the global economic situation that has become more complicated due to the illegitimate sanctions policy pursued by the West," the Kremlin readout said.

The two countries also pledged to work together to strengthen communication and coordination in international bodies such as the United Nations -- where the two often vote as a bloc.

"China is also willing to work with Russia to promote solidarity and cooperation among emerging market countries ... and push for the development of the international order and global governance towards a more just and reasonable direction," Xi said, in a comment that hit on the countries' shared aim of pushing back against what they view as the global hegemony of the United States.

Birthday greetings

The call was not the first time that Xi and Putin -- two strongmen drawn together by mutual distrust of the West -- have had engagements on each others' birthdays.

In 2013, Xi presented Putin with a birthday cake and the two drank vodka together to mark the Russian leader's 61st birthday during a conference in Indonesia. Xi later celebrated his 66th birthday during a 2019 summit in Tajikistan with Putin, who surprised him with [ice cream, cake and champagne](#).

Their personal relationship, in which Xi has described Putin as his "best and bosom friend" is also thought to bolster the dynamics of their strengthening rapport on the national level.

In its summary of the two leaders' latest call, the Kremlin noted the conversation was held in a "traditionally warm and friendly atmosphere."

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HEADLINE	06/15 Oregon decriminalizes drugs; OD deaths up
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/us/portland-drug-decriminalization-effort-tragedy
GIST	<p>The streets of downtown Portland, Oregon, resemble an open-air drug market.</p> <p>Heroin, meth and fentanyl use is rampant and often visible on city streets. Portland police officers drive by homeless addicts buying and using.</p> <p>The signs of drug addiction are actually increasing throughout the state, according to law enforcement sources. Oregon ranks second-highest among U.S. states for substance abuse with nearly one in five adults addicted.</p> <p>In November 2020, voters overwhelmingly passed Measure 110. The Drug Addiction Treatment and Recovery Act secured 58% of the votes and decriminalized possession of small amounts of hard drugs such as heroin, meth, cocaine and fentanyl.</p> <p>The new law made possession of those substances no more than a Class E violation, the equivalent of a traffic ticket punishable by a maximum \$100 fine. But the fine is dismissed when someone who is fined calls a help hotline, Lines for Life, and completes a health assessment. The idea is to connect drug abusers with services and treatment instead of putting them behind bars.</p>

Sixteen months into this first-in-the-nation experiment, the numbers paint a bleak picture. [Drug overdose deaths](#) hit an all-time high in 2021 with 1069, a 41% increase from 2020. And very few people are getting into treatment. According to The Lund Report, after one year, just 136 people had entered treatment, less than 1% of those helped by Measure 110. But the actual number may be even lower.

David Murray is a senior fellow in the Hudson Institute who advised drug czars in two different presidential administrations.

"It is predictable, was predicted and now, unfortunately, is coming to pass in front of our eyes," said Murray, "It is a tragedy and a self-inflicted wound."

The Oregon Judicial Department reports that, through the end of May, police throughout the state [had written 2,576 tickets for drug possession](#) since Measure 110 was enacted. Seventy-five percent of the tickets resulted in convictions, the vast majority because the offender never showed up in court.

Dwight Holton, CEO of Lines for Life, tells Fox News only 116 people have called the help hotline. Sixty-six of those callers just wanted verification of the assessment, so they could void the ticket, Holton said. Twenty-six, he says, were already in services of some kind and didn't want any more.

"About 20% — 24 people — were not previously involved in (addiction) services and wanted resources, so we connected them to relevant services," Holton says.

Mike Marshall, co-founder and director of Oregon Recovers, is not surprised by the dismal treatment numbers following implementation of Measure 110.

"It was never designed to reduce our addiction rates, so it was never designed to deal with our addiction crisis," Marshall says, "It was always meant to deal with the war on drugs."

[Oregon's war on drugs](#) may be over, but other crimes are on the rise and keeping police busy.

"What we're absolutely seeing is that as drug possession has been decriminalized, property crimes have increased and so has violent crime," said District Attorney Kevin Barnett of Washington County, Oregon. Police in rural parts of Oregon also tell Fox News they are seeing more theft as people steal to feed their addiction.

Portland, the state's largest city, set an all-time record with 90 murders in 2021. Police in Multnomah County link these to Measure 110, saying there's been a rise in homicides tied to drug turf wars between gangs.

Tera Hurst, executive director of the Health Justice Recovery Alliance, which is working to implement Measure 110, says the criticism is premature. Only 10% of \$300 million in available Measure 110 funds has been allocated to date.

The money is [coming from cannabis tax revenue](#), making it ineligible to be used for treatment, which is primarily covered by Medicaid. What Measure 110 is funding is recovery and harm reduction services.

The first \$30 million in grants went to needle exchange programs, peer-to-peer counseling, support housing and even [Narcan, which is used to revive people who overdose on heroin](#).

"I don't think it's just about getting folks into treatment," says Hurst. "It's also about meeting people and getting people out into the streets doing outreach for folks and getting them life-saving drugs. You can't save somebody if they overdose and die."

The Oregon Health Authority, which oversees Measure 110, also [defends the lack of people in treatment](#). "People enter treatment when they are ready to," said OHA spokesman Timothy Heider, "The support being built to help people will meet them where they are."

HEADLINE	06/16 Stocks fall: wipe \$3T retirement savings
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/stocks-drop-retirement-savings-401k-ira-3-trillion-2022/
GIST	<p>The U.S. stock market rout that has put U.S. equities in a bear market isn't just reducing the net worth of billionaires like Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos. It's also taking a toll on Americans' retirement savings, wiping out trillions of dollars in value.</p> <p>The selloff has erased nearly \$3 trillion from U.S. retirement accounts, according to Alicia Munnell, director of the Center for Retirement Research at Boston College. By her calculations, 401(k) plan participants have lost about \$1.4 trillion from their accounts since the end of 2021. People with IRAs — most of which are 401(k) rollovers — have lost \$2 trillion this year.</p> <p>This year's stock slump is most severe market downturn since March of 2020, when COVID-19 erupted in the U.S. Historically, 401(k) investments take about two years after a market decline of this size to regain their previous value.</p> <p>"Anybody who has to retire when the market is down is in a bad position," Munnell said.</p> <p>"Younger people, you can kind of wait it out — these things have come back time and time again," she added. "But people who use their retirement money to support themselves really suffer in this kind of event."</p> <p>Bubble losing air</p> <p>Retirement accounts are the main channel through which most Americans are exposed to the ups and downs of the stock market. Nearly three-quarters of all 401(k) money is held in stocks, according to a Vanguard report from 2021. This year it's been mostly down: The S&P 500 has sunk 22%, the Dow Jones Industrial Average has lost nearly 13% and the Nasdaq Composite has fallen more than 30%.</p> <p>To be sure, many Wall Street professionals viewed last year's run-up in stocks as a bubble fueled by speculators looking for a place to park new money. But that doesn't make the loss any easier to swallow for most workers, who lack the time, skill or interest to try to time the markets.</p> <p>"One could argue that these recent losses are simply wiping out the extraordinary gains that occurred from mid-2020 to the end of 2021, so that people are not actually worse off than before the pandemic," Munnell wrote in a blog post, shared first with CBS MoneyWatch. But human nature being what it is, "the prior gains were permanent, so the recent losses are no less painful.</p> <p>More risk, less reward</p> <p>For many low-income people, the growing popularity of so-called target-date funds has also made retirement savings more risky, Munnell noted. Left to their own devices, richer investors tend to choose riskier assets, like stocks. However, due in part to automated retirement tools, the lowest-paid participants today are slightly more likely to have money in stocks, according to Vanguard data she analyzed.</p> <p>Among workers with 401(k)s, those with annual income under \$30,000 a year had 81% of their retirement fund in stocks, while for those making over \$150,000, the figure was 76%.</p> <p>Target-date funds are a popular set-it-and-forget-it option for choosing a retirement plan, with more than half of all 401(k) participants holding a target-date fund, according to Morningstar Direct, an investment research firm.</p> <p>But data shared by Morningstar show that the most popular target-date funds — mutual funds that hold a range of investments and that automatically adjust according to a "target" retirement date — have lost between 10% and 22% of their assets under management this year. (Those losses are due to a fall in stock values as well as participants moving money out of their accounts, Morningstar noted.)</p>

Paltry 401(k) savings

With the median 401(k) account having a balance of just \$17,700 before the pandemic, this year's market decline would lop off more than \$3,500 in value. A would-be retiree with a balance of over \$81,000 — which would put them in the top 25% of savers — would see their nest egg shrink to just \$64,800.

Such figures underscore how much riskier retirement is today than for previous generations of workers, the vast majority of whom had employer-provided pensions that legally entitled them to a steady monthly payout after leaving the workforce.

"When the shift from define benefit to defined contribution [plans] happened, that shift meant that the individual bore the investment risk," Munnell said. "When the stock market is booming, it's easy to forget that. But when the market tanks, you have to remember that."

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HEADLINE	06/15 Notable Pride events stick to anti-police
SOURCE	https://www.newsweek.com/notable-pride-events-keep-anti-police-stance-after-threats-1716194
GIST	<p>Some notable upcoming Pride events have announced plans to maintain their stance in opposition of law enforcement officials attending, despite recent threats made to some Pride events over the past few weeks.</p> <p>New York City's Pride organization, Heritage of Pride and the Capitol Hill Pride event in Seattle recently announced that they plan to continue to enforce a ban on police officers attending. On Saturday, June 11, police in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, announced that 31 individuals who were believed to be associated with Patriot Front, a white nationalist group, were arrested near a Pride event. According to reports, police said that they found the individuals were in possession of an "operations plan" that detailed plans to riot near the Pride festival.</p> <p>In a statement sent to <i>Newsweek</i>, Capitol Hill Pride said, "Seattle's Capitol Hill Pride is continuing its ban on Seattle police participation inline with New York Pride...We feel the best way the police can provide security is on the perimeter watching for violators, hate groups and potential disruptions and uphold the new Washington State ban of open carry firearms at demonstrations instead of creating an intimidating police presence."</p> <p>The statement from Seattle's Capitol Hill Pride notes that the ban "does not prohibit any off-duty police officer from attending this public civil rights event," meaning that off-duty officers not in uniform are allowed to attend.</p> <p><i>Newsweek</i> reached out to the Seattle Police Department for comment.</p> <p>As the statement from the Capitol Hill Pride noted, a similar ban was announced by officials with the New York City Pride organization. A spokesperson for the New York City Pride organization directed <i>Newsweek</i> to its statement issued in May, which said, "Beginning in 2021, NYC Pride publicly banned corrections and law enforcement exhibitors from marching in their uniforms and participating in recruitment activities at NYC Pride events until at least 2025. This action was a step in the path of transformative justice affirming our commitment to eliminating violence, harm, and abuse at NYC Pride events."</p> <p>Dan Dimant of the New York City Pride organization also told <i>Newsweek</i> that staff members and members of the organization's executive board receive active shooter training every year.</p> <p><i>Newsweek</i> reached out to the New York Police Department for comment.</p> <p>Both New York City's Pride organization and Capitol Hill Pride initially barred uniformed officers from attending Pride events following the 2020 riots following George Floyd's death.</p>

Return to Top	<p>Several other Pride events scheduled throughout the upcoming month have taken a somewhat different stance on allowing police officers to attend.</p> <p>In 2021, the Denver Pride event barred police officers from attending, however, this year they created a new plan to allow police officers who identify as members of the LGBTQ community to attend, KMGH-TV reported.</p> <p>Similarly, in San Francisco, organizers of a Pride event previously announced that uniformed police officers wouldn't be allowed to attend, however, they altered their decision earlier this month.\</p> <p>"We have agreed that all first responders will march together in one contingent. Most law enforcement officers marching will be in casual dress. Police and fire department command staff will march in their class AA uniforms as regulated. There will be a small number of LGBTQ officers in uniform providing security for the contingent," the San Francisco Police Officers Pride Alliance and San Francisco LGBT Pride organization said in a joint statement on June 3.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 High fuel exports contribute to \$5/gal gas
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/high-u-s-fuel-exports-are-contributing-to-5-a-gallon-gas-11655371801?mod=hp_lead_pos3
GIST	<p>A rapid rise in American fuel exports this year has helped push gasoline prices to a record \$5 a gallon and is pressuring U.S. prices of natural gas, which hit the highest levels in over a decade earlier this month.</p> <p>In recent months, companies and commodities traders have shipped more U.S. gasoline and diesel to Latin America and other foreign markets, reaping higher prices than the fuel could fetch domestically. They have also sent more liquefied natural gas, or LNG, to Europe after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>The jumps in fuel shipments abroad are further draining U.S. inventories that were already languishing at low levels after output cuts during the worst of the pandemic. Now, American oil-and-gas producers and refiners are struggling to keep up with resurgent demand.</p> <p>While fuel exports haven't hit records, they are trending higher than in prior years. Seaborne shipments of gasoline, diesel and jet fuel departing the U.S. Gulf Coast in March, April and May averaged 32% higher compared with the same three months last year, and 11% higher than the same period in 2019, according to market-intelligence firm Kpler.</p> <p>Meanwhile, exports of natural gas—by LNG tanker and by pipeline to Mexico and Canada—vaulted to a record in March, to about 22% of U.S. gas production, according to the latest available data from the Energy Information Administration. Domestic prices earlier this month hit \$9.32 per million British thermal units, the highest level since 2008, driven by Europe's pursuit of supplies.</p> <p>U.S. exports have had little effect on domestic prices in recent years, as the country enjoyed plentiful supplies lifted by the fracking boom. But the rise in shipments comes as inventories of crude oil and petroleum products have fallen to the lowest levels since 2008. At that time, exports of refined fuels were much lower, and U.S. companies hadn't yet built major LNG export facilities.</p> <p>These unusual circumstances are for the first time causing exports to substantially affect what Americans pay for gasoline and natural gas, which makes it costlier to provide heat and electricity to homes, analysts said.</p> <p>Richard Dealy, chief operating officer of Pioneer Natural Resources Co., said Western countries are turning to U.S. supplies as Chinese and Russian exports of refined products have declined, a situation that wouldn't have been possible before the fracking boom made the U.S. one of the world's top producers.</p>

“The demand pull from the U.S. has gone up exponentially,” Mr. Dealy said. “We’re in a position today to export a lot more.”

The link between LNG exports and domestic prices—sometimes disputed by energy-industry advocates—was highlighted this week on the news that some natural gas planned for export would be stuck in the U.S. and sold domestically instead.

U.S. benchmark natural-gas prices tumbled almost 17% Tuesday to about \$7.19 per million British thermal units when Freeport LNG said its export facility in Texas [wasn’t expected to be entirely back online](#) until late 2022 because of repairs after a June 8 explosion.

On Wednesday, President Biden [issued letters to seven major U.S. fuel makers](#) including [Exxon Mobil](#) Corp., [Chevron](#) Corp., [Valero Energy](#) Corp. and [Shell](#) PLC, noting that U.S. refiners reduced capacity by more than 800,000 barrels a day earlier in the pandemic, and asking them to find ways to increase it now to curb rising prices. The letter didn’t mention fuel exports.

Some Democratic lawmakers including Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D., Mass.) have called for Mr. Biden to curtail exports to help ease prices, while House Republicans this month proposed increasing U.S. oil-and-gas production and exports to help replace Russian energy.

The American Petroleum Institute wants Mr. Biden to streamline approvals of energy-infrastructure projects and increase access to capital and energy lease sales, as its solution to the supply-demand problems, a strategy the administration has declined to pursue.

Robert Yawger, an analyst at [Mizuho](#), said U.S. fuel exports are affecting domestic prices as refiners and traders seek out higher prices for their products overseas but lack the capacity to keep U.S. inventories at normal levels. At current prices for gasoline and diesel, though, he said refiners’ arbitrage opportunities might soon close, which could lead the U.S. to buy more fuel from abroad, including from Europe.

“We always import some barrels, but we may spike here in coming weeks,” Mr. Yawger said.

Fuel and crude oil are trading cheaper for delivery in the winter than today, exacerbating the current low storage levels and high prices.

Normally, Katie Childs, vice president at Tuxis-Ohr’s Fuel Inc., a heating-oil supplier based in Meriden, Conn., would fill her company’s storage tanks during the spring and summer months. Instead, she has been buying futures to lock in lower prices. Last Friday, she could save about 40 cents a gallon purchasing fuel oil for delivery in December.

“There’s no incentive to put fuel in storage, which just then makes prices go higher because everything has low inventories,” Mrs. Childs said. “It’s just seemingly the perfect storm with energy prices.”

Some U.S. businesses are passing down higher energy bills to customers [in the form of fuel surcharges](#), including Fitzgerald Trucking Inc., a Minco, Okla.-based company with 28 pneumatic tankers that mostly haul dry cement powder and fly ash to customers building highways and homes. Joey Fitzgerald, the company’s president, said that so far, it has been able to pass along rising diesel costs because of strong demand for construction materials.

“You have to put fuel surcharges and escalators in there for a worst-case scenario,” Mr. Fitzgerald said, adding that he is bidding on projects now that would be delivered in six months to a year, when his costs might be higher because of inflation.

For Mark Behrman, chief executive of U.S. ammonia and fertilizer supplier [LSB Industries](#) Inc., the drop in natural-gas prices after news about the Freeport LNG terminal meant that the domestic prices he pays for [fertilizer feedstock](#) could finally ease, owing to less competition from Europe.

	<p>“This is the first time that LNG exports from the United States have had such an impact on U.S. demand and prices for users here,” Mr. Behrman said, adding that domestic prices have had to rise to keep supplies in the U.S.</p> <p>Mr. Behrman said he wouldn’t advocate that the U.S. stop LNG exports, as some manufacturers have in past years. But he said he believes that the only way domestic prices can return soon to \$3 or \$4 per million British thermal units, where prices have hovered for much of the past decade, is if U.S. natural-gas producers decide to pump more.</p> <p>Natural gas is a crucial fuel in electricity generation, and the rise in prices has boosted utility bills for businesses and households, which also often pay for natural-gas service to heat water and stoves. John Bartlett, president of Reaves Asset Management and co-portfolio manager of the Reaves Utility Income Fund, expects some consumers to reduce their use.</p> <p>“In the very short term, people may very well make tough choices,” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Fireworks ban unincorporated King Co.
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3519317/fireworks-ban-in-king-county-weeks-before-4th-of-july-celebrations/
GIST	<p>Most incorporated cities in King County already have fireworks bans, but unincorporated parts of the county have been a fireworks free-for-all on the Fourth of July. Not anymore.</p> <p>The King County Council has approved a ban on the use and sale of commercial fireworks in all unincorporated parts of the county.</p> <p>The ban also includes sparklers and smoke bombs.</p> <p>Since this is the first year of the ban, King County says its emphasis will be on educating the community, not on issuing citations. However, next summer, law enforcement will begin ticketing and fining anyone who violates the ban.</p> <p>“Our goal is to give the public information in advance to make sure they know about the new law and when it will take effect,” Fire Marshal Chris Ricketts wrote in a statement. “Our priority is safety. We want the people who live, work, and play in unincorporated King County to enjoy the Fourth of July, New Year’s Eve, and other holidays — safely.”</p> <p>The new fireworks ban was prompted by a 2019 incident that took the life of veteran Roland Kennedy and his two dogs, as well as burning down multiple homes in the area, leaving 13 people without a place to stay.</p> <p>On the Gee and Ursula show on KIRO Newsradio, Gee Scott and Spike O’Neill talked about the importance of allowing people to enjoy the holidays in contrast to ensuring safety.</p> <p>“You can also call me responsible for wanting your children and your loved ones and your house safe,” Gee said. “I believe fireworks started by amateurs lead to bad things. So I don’t like fire. I think fireworks are left best to and with the professionals. So King County is getting rid of fireworks here in this county. Yes. Love it. Awesome.”</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Schools to focus safety amid gun violence
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3519308/wa-superintendent-school-safety-gun-violence/
GIST	<p>There have been 54 U.S. mass shootings in the 22 days after the massacre in Uvalde, Texas. 62 people have died and another 223 have been injured, according to Gun Violence Archive.</p>

“It’s not unusual in terms of that behavior pattern in past violent incidences, unfortunately,” Chris Reykdal, Washington Superintendent of Public Instruction, said on the Gee and Ursula Show on whether or not the increase of gun violence in schools is new. “I wish it weren’t the case. What is new is with so many young people, their awareness is high. They’re on social media. They’re seeing these threats even when they’re not material. So we just have a lot more awareness, which is good.”

Mass shootings are defined as a minimum of four victims shot, either injured or killed, not including any shooter who may also have been killed or injured in the incident.

“It’s weighing on students in terms of mental health, and it weighs on all of us,” Reykdal said. “And the worry is real. It’s interesting this time of year that we will essentially wrap up schools in the next week and a half almost everywhere in the state. And so it’ll appear to sort of shut off rapidly, mostly because they won’t be in school.”

Gov. Jay Inslee signed a bill earlier this year to give K-12 schools more guidance on how to conduct active-shooter lockdown drills. The bill prohibits schools from conducting drills involving life-like simulations or reenactments of active shooter scenarios that are not “trauma-informed and age and developmentally appropriate.”

“Active shooter drills are associated with increases in depression, anxiety and fears about death among children as young as five years old to high schoolers, their parents and teachers,” Rep. Amy Walen, D-Kirkland, said during a press conference. Walen was the prime sponsor of the bill.

Reykdal stated that Washington schools will use this summer to prepare for the upcoming academic year.

“Our training has gotten a lot more sophisticated for the last four or five years. We always have a framework around student safety. There are training modules that we have in place for our staff that happen every year across the state,” Reykdal said. “We obviously have security staff who go through quite a bit more of that than when they’re hired locally. Students are going through this now in ways that we never have.”

Earlier this week, Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine signed a bill into law that makes it easier for teachers and staff to carry guns on school premises. The bill reduces the hours of training required for armed school personnel from 700 to 24, according to the legislation.

“The only statistic that is ultimately consistently proven true, is the density of firearms, the amount of firearms per 100,000 population is the tightest and highest correlation to murder, homicide, and suicide,” said Reykdal. “So more guns is never the answer to gun violence. We saw in the two most high-profile shootings in the last 30 days, the active shooter was confronted with an armed officer well trained and did nothing to be able to stop that.”

All of this, on top of working in schools during a pandemic, has caused morale to rapidly decrease for teachers nationwide.

“It’s still a tough, tough moment right now due to very intentional political efforts to vilify public school teachers, and they don’t deserve it. They are amazing,” Reykdal said. “They’re heroes to me still, and they’re still going to educate a million kids every year for 1,000 instructional hours and lay the foundation for our future labor force. We desperately need them, and we need them to be really satisfied in their work.”

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HEADLINE	06/16 Russia army ramps up recruitment
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/06/16/russia-military-army-soldiers-recruitment/
GIST	RIGA, Latvia — Russia is scrambling to recruit men to fight in Ukraine after major losses in the early months of the war left the army stretched thin and some soldiers disenchanted.

The Kremlin has so far declined to order a general mobilization of draft-age soldiers, because this could signal that the war is not proceeding as well as depicted in the Russian media and threaten to stir grass-roots resistance to the military campaign.

Instead, the military has embarked on a campaign to expand the ranks of active soldiers who have voluntarily signed contracts by cold-calling eligible men and trying to reactivate reservists.

“These efforts represent a form of shadow mobilization. These are piecemeal efforts that allow the Russian military to sustain itself in the war, but do not address the fundamental deficit in manpower,” wrote Michael Kofman, director of Russia studies at CNA, a think tank in Virginia, in a recent [analysis](#).

Just a few weeks after the Feb. 24 invasion, online job sites began advertising thousands of positions offered by the Defense Ministry, which is looking for all kinds of service members, from antitank grenadiers to drivers and reconnaissance snipers. The listings, which were first [reported](#) by BBC Russian service, are republished or updated every few days.

In a recruiting ad posted in Rostov-on-Don, just a few hundred miles away from Ukraine, a deep voice narrates: “Test the limits of your abilities! No, screw the limits, are you ready to break yourself every day?” The action-packed ad continues, “You’ve decided to prove something to yourself. You are trying to detect an enemy in every shadow because if there is no enemy, there is no fight, and if there is no fight, there is no victory.”

Recruitment efforts have been particularly obvious in St. Petersburg, where an inflated figure of a smiling, uniformed officer waved at by-passers earlier this month, beckoning them into an enlistment office to learn more about the perks of serving in a professional army.

Job listings and recruitment fliers offer a modest base pay that can go up to \$3,500-4,000 a month with bonuses. Each day of combat, for instance, yields extra pay of about \$55. These sums eclipse the Russian median salary of about \$600 dollars a month and, together with low-interest mortgages and various other subsidies, can be appealing, especially in a shrinking economy.

Russia is also conducting its spring draft, which seeks to conscript about 130,000 men between 18 and 27 by mid-July. By law, conscripts can’t be sent into battle unless they undergo at least four months of training, and the Kremlin has repeatedly vowed that the conscripts won’t be sent to Ukraine at all. But there have been at least two officially confirmed cases where hundreds of inexperienced soldiers ended up in the war zone.

Recruiters across the country have also been calling eligible men to promote contract military service.

Nikita Yuferev, a municipal lawmaker from St. Petersburg, got such a call in late May. “[The caller] explained that her task was simply to call and inform: ‘They gave me a list, and I call up the district’s residents. Those of conscription age,’ she said,” Yuferev recounted. The recruiter told Yuferev that she couldn’t disclose compensation or other details of the proposed employment over the phone and offered him to come to the station in person.

“At the end of our conversation, she told me verbatim: ‘Before going to an appointment, you need to think carefully. I am not persuading you. This is a very big decision in your life,’” Yuferev added.

Dmitry, who provided only his first name because he feared reprisals, said he received a similar call from a recruiter in the Moscow region. An enthusiastic man asked if Dmitry was interested in a short-term, three to six months contract with “a competitive salary” and also invited him to come to the office.

Both Dmitry and Nikita declined the invitations, offer fearing if they went go to the office, they might not return home.

Human rights groups and lawyers working with the Russian military have reported that enlistment offices have been calling in reservists for “checks” and “updates of personal information,” and then offering them a contract. “So as far as I can see, the Ministry of Defense is using the opportunity to call up those who are in reserve in order to offer them a contract and then send them to war,” Sergei Krivenko, director of the “Citizen. Army. Law” human rights group, said in an interview.

Vadim Shatrov signed a three-month contract in mid-May and was assigned to the 138th motorized rifle brigade in the Belgorod region. “Two days had passed between the moment I came to the military enlistment office ‘just to ask’ and the moment when I was sent off,” Vadim wrote in a diary that he keeps on his Telegram channel.

Shatrov said financial reasons, specifically the need to provide for his ex-wife and their child, and his patriotic views were the main reasons he enlisted. But his decision also appears to have been driven partly by the Russian propaganda that paints NATO and “Ukrainian Nazis” as an existential threat to Russia.

“The way I see it — I’m not going to fight against ordinary Ukrainians; I’m going to fight with NATO, Nazis and terrorists!” Shatrov said in mid-May.

But the closer he got to the Ukrainian border, the more disenchanted he grew. Fellow soldiers who returned from “behind the ribbon” — slang for crossing into Ukraine — told him horrifying battle tales and lamented poor planning that left Russian soldiers eating grass due to a lack of provisions.

“I have not such patriotic news,” Shatrov wrote. “In the dining room, I met volunteers just like me. They were there for five days, and 80 percent did not return. Out of the four people from Yaroslavl, only one guy came back. He said his commanders abandoned them there.”

British intelligence estimates that Russian losses in the first three months of the war were up to 20,000, while Ukrainian officials said Russian losses were nearing 30,000. Kofman said that “a reasonable estimate, based on limited information, would place Russian troops killed in action at somewhere 7,000–15,000, with the more likely figure close to 10,000.”

Moscow, in its last official death toll in March, said it had lost only 1,351 soldiers. A Russian lawmaker from the parliament’s defense committee, Andrey Kartapolov, said the number hasn’t been updated since then because Russia “basically stopped losing people.” That comment runs counter to the almost-daily obituaries appearing on social media.

In his diary blog, Shatrov described old equipment handed out to fighters, like “rusty Kalashnikov rifles from the 1980s” and dilapidated personal armor. He said fellow soldiers complained about the lack of rest time and poorly planned battles in which outnumbered Russian units suffered losses from Ukrainian artillery fire.

His account was consistent with other reports about growing exhaustion among the Russian units.

“We’ve had several hundred requests from people who wanted to sever their contract prematurely,” Krivenko said. “Some explain that lack of any comms [with loved ones] was the reason, some blame command that abandoned them or [complain] about callous conditions.”

“And just overall, they say the war is brutal, and it’s not clear to them what are they doing there and who are they are fighting against,” he added.

Shatrov, however, appears to be still committed to the cause. In one of the latest posts he shared from the encampment near the Ukrainian border, he praised the Russian soldiers’ bravery, while decrying how “boys were dying” because of “stupid” command decisions.

HEADLINE	06/15 Ukraine grain crisis hits 5 countries hard
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/06/15/ukraine-war-russia-grain-food-crisis-world-hunger/
GIST	<p>Russia's blockade of Ukrainian ports and the ripple effects of Western sanctions on Moscow have driven up global food prices, raised fears of looming grain shortages and exacerbated concerns about rising hunger around the world.</p> <p>Ukraine and Russia produce about a third of the wheat traded in global markets, and about a quarter of the world's barley, according to the Washington-based International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). Exports from the two countries — which also include sunflower oil and corn to feed livestock — account for about 12 percent of total calories traded in the world.</p> <p>The war could affect at least three wheat harvests in Ukraine, the country's agriculture minister, Mykola Solskyi, said Tuesday in an interview with Reuters, with last year's harvest still stuck at Black Sea ports and nowhere to store the incoming crops.</p> <p>U.S. and European officials have accused Russia of weaponizing food and called for the reopening of Ukraine's ports. The crisis comes as climate disasters, conflict and economic strain from the coronavirus pandemic were already causing hunger to worsen in many countries, particularly in Africa and the Middle East.</p> <p>The war in Ukraine could push up the number of people facing acute food insecurity by 47 million this year, according to the United Nations.</p> <p>Some places are already feeling the effects of the grain crisis. Here are five countries to watch.</p> <p>Nigeria Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, depends heavily on imported grain. Wheat makes up a large portion of the diet, but only 1 percent of the wheat consumed annually is produced domestically.</p> <p>About 43 percent of Nigerians live below the poverty line. Malnutrition and food insecurity have stunted the growth of more than a third of children under 5, according to government statistics from 2018.</p> <p>The war in Ukraine has compounded other factors fueling hunger in Nigeria, including an insurgency in the northeast and a below-average rainfall forecast in the country's Middle Belt and southern regions.</p> <p>Nigeria was among a handful of nations ranked at the highest alert level in the latest U.N. "Hunger Hotspots" report. This year, the number of people in Nigeria included under the "emergency" category in the international food insecurity classification system is projected to reach nearly 1.2 million between June and August.</p> <p>"Africa has no control over production or logistics chains and is totally at the mercy of the situation," Senegalese President Macky Sall, chair of the African Union, said ahead of a trip to Russia this month to seek a resolution to the crisis.</p> <p>Sall later warned in an interview with France 24 that famine could destabilize the continent.</p> <p>Somalia and Ethiopia Somalia and Ethiopia, located in the Horn of Africa, are dealing with a lethal intersection of climate change, conflict and rising food prices.</p> <p>Along with Kenya, the countries are in the midst of their worst drought in four decades. The World Food Program warned that 20 million people in the region could go hungry because of drought by the end of the year.</p>

Because of the “very severe climactic conditions,” countries in the Horn of Africa needed to import more food than usual this year, David Laborde, senior research fellow at IFPRI, said. But Somalia relies on Russia and Ukraine for more than 90 percent of its wheat imports.

Domestic conflicts are further complicating access to food. In Somalia, fighting between the government and [al-Qaeda-linked al-Shabab militants](#) continues to drive displacement. In Ethiopia, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed’s government has been battling rebels from the northern Tigray region since 2020. More than 9 million people have required food aid because of the war, according to the United Nations, and hundreds of thousands were on the brink of famine during some periods.

The war in Ukraine contributed to a surge in food prices in Ethiopia this spring, with aid groups [reporting](#) a “massive shortage” of bread and oil.

Somalia and Ethiopia also fall under the United Nations’ highest alert category — Phase 5 of the [Integrated Phase Classification](#) — where some populations are “identified or projected to experience starvation or death.”

More than 80,000 people in Somalia could face these conditions this year, according to U.N. [projections](#). Children are already [dying of malnutrition](#), and nearly 2 million across Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia need treatment urgently.

UNICEF, the U.N. children’s fund, has warned that the Ukraine conflict is hampering its ability to respond. The cost of therapeutic food the agency uses to treat children with severe acute malnutrition is expected to rise by 16 percent globally over the next six months, UNICEF’s deputy regional director for eastern and southern Africa, Rania Dagash, [said this month](#).

Egypt

The Middle East and North Africa region is particularly affected by the conflict because of its proximity to the Black Sea, Corinne Fleischer, the World Food Program’s regional director, told The Washington Post.

The coronavirus pandemic caused hunger in the region to rise by 25 percent. “We’re expecting another 10 to 12 percent rise, because those people who are at risk now get higher prices, and that’s going to make them dependent on receiving food aid,” she said.

Supply issues and high food prices caused by the war could be “the straw that breaks the camel’s back for many, many people in the region,” Fleischer said.

Egypt is the world’s largest importer of wheat. Russia and Ukraine together supplied more than 80 percent of the country’s wheat imports before the war, so it was immediately affected by supply disruptions.

Traditional “baladi” flatbread is the backbone of the Egyptian diet, and the government subsidizes bread for more than 70 million of Egypt’s approximately 102 million people.

Famine isn’t a concern in Egypt, Laborde said. Instead, worries revolve around the cost for the government to “maintain their social safety net programs and to avoid some kind of political instability,” he said.

High food prices were among the economic woes that contributed to the outbreak of the 2011 Arab Spring revolutions. And price increases affecting bread and other goods in Egypt in the 1970s [sparked riots](#) that prompted the government to quickly reverse course.

“Conflict drives hunger, and hunger feeds conflict,” Fleischer said.

To stave off discontent, the government has looked for new wheat suppliers, ordered Egyptian farmers to harvest their wheat ahead of schedule and sought funds from Saudi Arabia and the IMF to help bankroll its bread subsidies, [the Wall Street Journal reported](#).

The government has kept bread subsidies in place but added [stricter conditions](#) for eligibility to curb spending. It also put limits on the amount vendors can charge for unsubsidized baladi bread, according to the Journal — so bakeries and bread sellers are bearing the brunt of the rising global wheat prices.

Yemen

The World Food Program was already providing food for 13 million people in Yemen, where a long civil war has driven up food and fuel prices and caused a widespread hunger crisis.

The agency typically buys half of the wheat for its global food assistance from Ukraine. At a time when more people around the world require aid, the cost of providing it has gone up, leaving the agency with significant budget shortfalls. WFP [announced Tuesday](#) that it was suspending part of its food aid in South Sudan after funding ran out.

“We’re now having to decide which children eat, which children don’t eat, which children live, which children die,” WFP Executive Director David Beasley [told The Post last month](#). The program already had to cut food rations for 8 million people in Yemen before Russia invaded Ukraine. Now, Fleischer said, the agency fears that it will have to cut more.

As part of the Ukraine aid bill lawmakers passed in May, the United States allocated \$5 billion to address global food shortages stemming from the war.

Still, for some people in countries vulnerable to famine and mired in conflict, the effects of the war in Ukraine could make the difference between life and death.

“You can survive up to the point where you cannot,” Laborde said.

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HEADLINE	06/15 US electronics in Russia military gear
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/06/15/us-computer-chips-russian-military/
GIST	<p>Federal agents have begun questioning U.S. technology companies on how their computer chips ended up in Russian military equipment recovered in Ukraine.</p> <p>Commerce Department agents who enforce export controls are conducting the inquiries together with the FBI, paying joint visits to companies to ask about Western chips and components found in Russian radar systems, drones, tanks, ground-control equipment and littoral ships, according to people familiar with the matter, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive investigations.</p> <p>“Our goal is to actually try to track that back, all the way back to the U.S. supplier” to determine “how did it find its way into that weapons system,” one Commerce Department official said of the probes.</p> <p>“Just because a chip, a company’s chip, is found in a weapon system doesn’t mean we’ve opened up an investigation on that company,” the official added. “What we’ve done, though, is we’ve opened up an investigation on how that company’s chip got into that system.”</p> <p>It isn’t clear which specific components are being probed. But investigators from a variety of countries have identified Western electronics in Russian weaponry found in Ukraine. Many of those components appear to have been manufactured years ago, before the United States tightened export restrictions after Russia seized Crimea in 2014. But others were manufactured as recently as 2020, according to Conflict Armament Research (CAR), a research group in London that has examined some of the parts.</p> <p>For years it was legal for companies to sell basic computer chips to Russian military entities without first receiving permission from the U.S. government, so pinpointing illegal sales requires determining the type of chip and date of sale. Tracing transactions can also be laborious because electronic components often travel through a chain of distributors before reaching the end user.</p>

A lawyer representing one of the contacted technology companies said investigators for now are casting a “wide net,” looking at a variety of different chips and electronic components to track the paths they took to the Russian military.

Among the questions federal agents are asking: whether tech companies sold their products to a specific list of companies, including middlemen, that may have been involved in the supply chain, the lawyer said.

Russia manufactures few computer chips or electronics of its own, forcing it to rely on imports.

The United States for decades has tightly controlled sales to Russia of the highest-tech chips and those designed for military use, requiring exporters to obtain a government license. But sales of electronics below that threshold — including the kind commonly found in commercial products — were not widely restricted until 2014, when the United States began requiring exporters to obtain licenses before selling a broader range of chips to the Russian military.

Since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February, the U.S. and many allies have prohibited all chip sales to Russian military buyers, and placed restriction on chip sales to other Russian buyers in an effort to prevent the country’s armed forces from accessing western high-tech.

The federal probes come as researchers and security services from Ukraine, Britain and elsewhere report finding a host of Western electronics in Russian military gear damaged or abandoned in Ukraine.

CAR last month sent investigators to Ukraine to examine Russian weaponry and communications equipment, and reported finding components from 70 companies based in the United States and Europe.

They found the parts in military radios, airborne defense systems and in remnants of cruise missiles that the Ukrainians recovered in various towns and villages, Damien Spleeters, one of the CAR investigators, said in an interview.

CAR for now is declining to name the Western companies involved, because it is still contacting them to request more information, Spleeters said.

Markings on two foreign-made chips that Spleeters examined showed that they were manufactured in 2019, he said.

“It’s significant for me because it shows that even after Russia took Crimea and the first package of sanctions were taken against them, they still managed to acquire critical technology, critical components for important pieces of equipment that they are now using against Ukraine,” Spleeters said.

Those chips, found inside two Russian military radios recovered in Ukraine’s Luhansk region, had some of their identification markings scratched out, suggesting that Russia “wanted to make it more difficult to find out who was involved in the chain of supply,” Spleeters said.

Another set of chips manufactured by Western companies between 2017 and 2020 were part of missile fragments that hit the southern Ukrainian city of Mykolaiv on March 29, Spleeters said. At the time, Russian forces were attempting to capture a broad swathe of Ukraine’s Black Sea coast.

CAR also examined Western-made chips manufactured between 2013 and 2018 that were part of a missile that landed in central Ukraine on Feb. 24, the first day of Russia’s invasion, Spleeters said.

The latest CAR findings follow a report from the group late last year that detailed Western electronics found in several Russian military drones.

A team from a separate British group — the Royal United Services Institute, or RUSI, a defense-focused think tank — also traveled to Ukraine recently to inspect Russian equipment and to review teardowns conducted by Ukraine’s military.

A single piece of radio-jamming equipment revealed computer chips from a dozen U.S. companies, including Intel, Analog Devices, Texas Instruments and Onsemi, according to a report RUSI published in April. The gear also contained components from half a dozen chipmakers in Europe, Japan and Taiwan.

The report published the part numbers for the components, which The Washington Post used to identify the chip companies.

The radio-interference equipment, named Borisoglebsk-2, was designed to interrupt the enemy’s communications and was probably manufactured around 2015 or later, Nick Reynolds, one of the report’s authors, said in an interview.

None of the Western chips was specifically designed for use in military equipment, according to two electrical engineers who reviewed the component list. The parts were developed for general commercial use, and many were relatively outdated, manufactured between 2000 and 2010, the engineers said.

“A lot of these components are very general purpose and could be used in wide range of devices,” said Peter Bermel, an associate professor of electrical and computer engineering at Purdue University. “Most of the items they are listing are available through any commercial computer parts supplier or digital parts supplier.”

“A non-trivial fraction of these parts are now considered obsolete by the manufacturers,” Bermel added.

Reynolds, a research analyst for land warfare at RUSI, said Russia’s technical demise in recent decades, partly sparked by a large post-Soviet brain drain, has forced it to use Western chips. “Its defense industry has struggled to attract and retain talented young engineers, who have often chosen to move abroad instead,” Reynolds said by email.

Intel spokesman William Moss said that for over a decade, all of the company’s “sales in Russia have been through distributors who are responsible for complying with applicable laws, including U.S. export controls.”

“Intel has suspended all shipments to customers in both Russia and Belarus, and Intel will continue to comply with all applicable export regulations and sanctions,” he added.

Onsemi, a chip company based in Phoenix, said it stopped producing one of the chips found in the Russian equipment in 2008. The chip was “designed for a variety of uses in commercial products,” spokeswoman Stefanie Cuene said, adding that the company complies with U.S. export controls and currently does not sell any products to Russia or Belarus.

Texas Instruments “complies with applicable laws and regulations” and “is not selling any products into Russia or Belarus,” spokeswoman Ellen Fishpaw said.

Analog Devices, the company behind more than a dozen of the components found in the Russian equipment, didn’t respond to requests for comment.

The RUSI researchers also reported inspecting a U.S.-manufactured component that the Ukrainian military found inside a Russian 9M949 guided rocket. The rocket uses the component — a type of electronic device called a fiber-optic gyroscope — for navigation, RUSI said.

The British researchers declined to name the U.S. company that made that component, saying RUSI was continuing to research that and other parts.

HEADLINE	06/15 Cherry crops smallest nearly a decade?
SOURCE	https://crosscut.com/news/2022/06/nw-cherry-crop-year-may-be-smallest-nearly-decade
GIST	<p>This year, there aren't many cherries to harvest at Tonnemaker Hill Farm in Royal City, a small town about 20 miles east of the Columbia River in Central Washington.</p> <p>Snowy and cold conditions in April caused the farm to lose 98% of its cherry crop, which makes up a sizable portion of the 126-acre orchard. That means fewer cherries to sell at the farmers markets in Seattle, Eastern Washington and Idaho.</p> <p>Cherry growers in Washington state, who produce the majority of Northwest sweet cherries, often have to respond to weather conditions — frost during the early months of 2020 or triple-digit temperatures in late June last year that damaged ripening fruit.</p> <p>This year, the cold and wet spring stunted the development of many cherries, leading to what looks to be the smallest crop of Northwest sweet cherries in nearly a decade.</p> <p>That will likely mean higher prices at local grocery stores and farmers markets. And with cherries taking longer to develop, harvest has been delayed by several weeks, meaning consumers in the Northwest — and throughout the U.S. — have to wait longer to get their first taste of the juicy red fruit.</p> <p>"It's unprecedented," said Kurt Tonnemaker, who oversees sales efforts of his family's two farms, in Royal City and Woodinville. "It's hard to plan for that."</p> <p>Nearly 15 million 20-pound boxes are expected to come from growers in the five-state region — Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Utah and Montana, according to the latest estimate of the Northwest Cherry Growers, the Yakima-based marketing organization.</p> <p>If the estimate sticks, that would be nearly a quarter less than the 20.3 million boxes harvested a year ago and the smallest crop since 2013, when the region produced just 14.3 million boxes.</p> <p>The recent rain that soaked the region also stunted an already delayed harvest. Some growers in early season areas — including orchards in Pasco and Mattawa — did some picking on Friday, but had to stop for several days because of rain, said B.J. Thurlby, president of the Northwest Cherry Growers.</p> <p>Growers will find out later this week whether last week's weather damaged the cherries, he said.</p> <p>Rain can cause nearly ripened cherries to split open, which makes them no longer worth picking because they can't be sold.</p> <p>"There's a possibility the crop can be whittled down even more," said Frank Lyall, a Yakima Valley cherry grower.</p> <p>It will likely be a few weeks before a sizable volume of cherries shows up at farmers markets and grocery stores around the Pacific Northwest and potentially even longer in other parts of the U.S., Thurlby said.</p> <p>Weather's impact</p> <p>The state's early and midseason cherry-growing regions, including the Tri-Cities and Yakima Valley areas, experienced mild temperatures earlier this year, which caused trees to bloom sooner than usual.</p> <p>But in April — to the unfortunate surprise of growers — many regions were hit by a cold snap, along with snow, which damaged cherries in bloom. Further damage came from poor pollination activity caused by cold and wet conditions, which kept many cherries on the tree from developing at all and delaying others.</p> <p>The timing of such adverse weather conditions also means the impact has been quite uneven. Some growers, such as the Tonnemaker family in Royal City, experienced a near-total loss. Growers in higher-</p>

elevation areas, which grow fruit that won't be ready until later in the summer, are expected to have relatively minimal loss because their cherry trees were not far enough in bloom to sustain damage.

Other cherry producers will likely see some damage, though not to the extent of growers such as the Tonnemaker family.

Lyall, the Yakima Valley grower, expects a below-average harvest at his cherry orchards in Mattawa, Desert Aire and North Prosser. He estimates that he may have lost over a quarter to a third of his crop, but won't know the extent of the loss until the harvest is done at the end of July.

Still, there are plenty of cherries to harvest, as he has a variety of cherries under different growing seasons. He notes that his crop of Rainiers — the popular cherries with yellow-red flesh — look healthy compared with some of his red varieties. Plenty of late-season cherries, which won't be picked until the end of July, remain on the trees.

"It's always highly dependent on variety and location," he said.

Lyall isn't just worried about the weather. He's also concerned about inflation. Fuel costs are skyrocketing, and the prices of pesticides and other items used for production are going up. Some of those costs will be passed on to cherry fans. Lyall is concerned customers may buy fewer cherries, which industry officials say often are part of an impulse purchase.

"They only have so many discretionary dollars," Lyall said. "By the time people are through paying for bread and fundamental necessities, they won't be able to afford relatively more expensive fruits and vegetables. That could impact the more expensive crops of Eastern Washington."

How the market will respond

While customers will have to pay more for cherries this year, raising prices to cover costs throughout the production process and pricing shoppers out aren't necessarily the best option for retailers or growers selling directly to customers at farmers markets.

Figuring out how to maintain a profit while avoiding alienating shoppers on a budget is crucial for the state's food retailers, be it local farmers markets, growers curating farm boxes for consumers or national grocery chains.

Neighborhood farmers markets sell a smaller percentage of the crop compared with grocery chains. However, the importance of Northwest cherries to their bottom line remains the same for both.

For larger chains, revenue projections in the produce category are based on the volume of different crops in previous years, said Ken Bethea, produce and floral field merchandiser at QFC, the grocery chain owned by Kroger.

With several million fewer boxes of Northwest cherries expected this year, that means an absence of tens of millions of dollars in sales for grocery stores, he said.

Retailers like QFC will have to pivot promotions planned for cherries to other Washington-grown fruits, such as peaches and nectarines, to draw shoppers in, he said.

It's unlikely shoppers will see loss-leader pricing, which are promotional prices — think of those 99-cent to \$1.49-a-pound sales — grocery stores adopt to draw people to their stores.

At the same time, grocery chains, especially those in locations where customers have more limited incomes, must be careful when increasing prices.

QFC's Bethea said retailers would focus on keeping the "everyday price" down — \$2.99 to \$3.99 a pound for red cherries — for most of the season and have limited promotions where prices can drop slightly

below that. Rainier cherries, the popular yellow-red variety, will be a little more expensive than that, but not to the point that they're inaccessible for shoppers.

"We don't want to price any family out of cherries on [price]," he said.

Sales and the number of shopper visits increase when cherries and berries are available, which marks the start of warmer and drier weather after months of rain, said Jennifer Antos, executive director of Seattle Neighborhood Farmers Markets, which runs several seasonal and year-round markets.

There's been a limited amount of cherries available at some of her markets — through vendors that grow them in greenhouses or who had early-season cherries ready to pick. Otherwise, it's slim pickings until late June or even early July, Antos said.

The delay in cherry availability is an educational opportunity about seasonal eating for shoppers interested in learning how their food is grown, she said.

"We're talking — through our newsletter and our social posts — about why cherries aren't on the table yet and give some consumer education about how the weather is affecting growers," she said.

Aside from customer education, Seattle Neighborhood Farmers Markets also helps its vendors survive tough times, including weather damage. The organization's Good Farmer Fund awarded anywhere from \$15,000 to \$60,000 in grants in four of the last five years. Six to nine vendors received grants in each of those years.

At the pandemic's peak in 2020, the organization awarded more than \$308,000 in grants to 72 vendors affected by closures and other government restrictions.

The award amount each year "really ranges," Antos said. "It speaks to how unpredictable farming can be and how significant even a small event can be for a grower who is working on a small scale."

Many growers also are diversifying where or which products they sell to better deal with adversity, said Colleen Donovan, executive director of the Washington State Farmers Market Association, a trade association made up of 115 farmers markets statewide.

Some farmers may grow exclusively to sell at farmers markets, while others opt to sell both at a farmers market or wholesale. Cherry growers, for example, may also sell to a fruit packaging house that sorts the fruit into bags or clamshell containers and distributes them to retailers.

"There's no one-size-fits-all," Donovan said about how growers approach selling their fruit.

Kurt Tonnemaker of Tonnemaker Hill and Tonnemaker Valley farms said his family has been able to continue selling other produce and groceries, including in-season asparagus and rhubarb, but also frozen cherries and dehydrated fruit leather made with fruit picked last season.

Tonnemaker also sells vegetables and herbs he grows at his farm in Woodinville. And while cherries are gone from the Royal City orchard, there's still plenty of other soft fruit such as peaches to sell in the coming months.

Still, the family will feel the loss of cherries as the crop makes up roughly a tenth of the family farm's income for the year, he said.

"They are a high-market item when you have them," he said. "They bring in a lot of cash at the beginning of the season."

But the Tonnemaker family is no stranger to dealing with — and surviving — adverse weather conditions. Thirty years ago, Kurt Tonnemaker launched the family’s now successful direct sales business. That year, rain wiped out the family’s newly planted cherry crop in Eastern Washington.

“It’s the 30th anniversary of losing our cherries,” he quipped.

Cherries expected to linger for longer

In email newsletters, the Northwest Cherry Growers emphasized the positives amid a challenging growing season.

One is the high quality of the fruit, which “should be a crop of dessert-quality fruit,” the organization wrote in its June 10 newsletter.

Industry officials have noted with more late-season cherries coming to harvest, supply could last longer than usual.

There might not be as many cherries for the Fourth of July holiday, which is typically a significant promotional period for grocery stores. There could, however, be plenty of cherries not just for the rest of July, but into August and even September, said Thurlby, the Northwest Cherry Growers president.

That means a taste of summer may linger at grocery stores and local farmers markets, as the calendar approaches the fall months.

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HEADLINE	06/15 Toronto police admit systemic racism
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/k7bq8w/toronto-police-admit-they-are-more-likely-to-pull-guns-on-black-people
GIST	<p>Toronto police have finally admitted to what the city’s Black residents and activists have been saying for a long time—the way they police is rife with systemic racism.</p> <p>In a press conference Wednesday, Police Chief James Ramer apologized for what newly-released data shows: that Black, Indigenous, and other racialized Torontonians are subjected to police use-of-force and strip searches significantly more often than their white counterparts, with no explanation.</p> <p>“On behalf of the police, I am sorry and I apologize unreservedly,” Ramer said.</p> <p>“As challenging as it is for me as chief and for members of our command and service to come to terms with what our data tells us, I know that it will be even more difficult for those from Toronto's Black communities who have been telling us for many years of their experiences. And I want our communities to know I am listening.”</p> <p>The Toronto Police Service’s analysis of 2020 data looked at 949 use-of-force incidents and 7,114 strip searches. It showed that when it comes to enforcement, Black people were overrepresented by 2.2 times compared to their share of the population, followed by Indigenous people at 1.6 times; of those involved in a police interaction, Black people were 1.6 times more likely to experience use-of-force.</p> <p>The report found that Black, East/Southeast Asian people, and South Asian people were more likely to have an officer point a gun at them by a factor of 1.5 times, 1.6 times, and 2 times, respectively. Officers police were 2.3 times more likely to point a gun at a Black person than a white person even when they didn’t think the person was armed.</p> <p>According to the Toronto Star, when looking at the total population as a benchmark, police were five times more likely to use force on Black people than white people in 2020.</p>

Indigenous people were the most overrepresented in strip searches, by a factor of 1.3 compared to how often they were arrested. A 2019 report from police watchdog the Office of the Independent Police Review Director found that Toronto police conducted far too many strip searches—a subsequent policy change significantly cut down how often the force employs strip searches.

Ramer said Toronto police have “never been more committed to progressive and inclusive change,” and pointed to 38 action items including “listening and understanding,” reviewing video of all use-of-force incidents, revised training, and continuing to publish data online.

However, Ramer was called out at the press conference by Beverly Bain, a member of the No Pride in Policing Coalition and an assistant professor at the University of Toronto.

“The Black community never asked for an apology,” she said, adding she and others have been telling police this has been happening for decades. “What we have asked for you to do is to stop, to stop brutalizing us, to stop killing us.”

She said she has been calling for defunding of the police and a reallocation of those funds into community housing and resources that don’t involve cops.

“None of that has happened. What have we witnessed? An escalation in policing budget.”

She also took issue with Ramer’s repeated comments that the reports are about systemic racism and “not of individual acts of racism.”

“Your police officers are responsible for their racism,” she said. “They’re the ones who put our lives at risk.”

Ramer said the data from the report had to be anonymized.

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HEADLINE	06/16 Day 113 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/16/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-113-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ukraine has so far defied a Russian ultimatum to surrender Sievierodonetsk, with Moscow controlling 80% of the city, a focal point of Russia’s advances in the east of the country. Russia demanded Ukrainian forces stop their “senseless resistance and lay down arms” from Wednesday morning and accused Kyiv of disrupting plans to open a humanitarian corridor for civilians to escape.• Thousands of civilians, including women, children and elderly people, are trapped in Sievierodonetsk with a diminishing supply of food, clean water, sanitation and electricity. An urgent situation is developing in the bunkers beneath the Azot chemical plant in the city, a UN spokesperson said. About 500 civilians believed to be trapped alongside soldiers inside Azot were preparing to flee the city through a possible humanitarian corridor.• The US will provide an additional \$1bn in security assistance to Ukraine for its fight in the eastern Donbas, Joe Biden has confirmed. The support package included 18 additional howitzers with tactical vehicles to tow them, 36,000 rounds of 155mm ammunition for the howitzers, and two Harpoon coastal defence systems, the defence department said.• Volodymyr Zelenskiy has urged the EU to tighten sanctions on Russia and warned Moscow’s forces could attack other countries. In an address to the Czech parliament, Ukraine’s president said Moscow’s invasion “is the first step that the Russian leadership needs to open the way to other countries, to the conquest of other peoples”.• Nato’s secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg, said allies would continue to supply Ukraine with heavy weapons and long-range systems, with an agreement on a new package of assistance to Kyiv expected at the summit in Madrid later this month. The agreement would help Ukraine move from old Soviet-era weaponry to “more modern Nato standard” gear, he said. Stoltenberg was

	<p>speaking before a meeting in Brussels of defence ministers from Nato and other countries to discuss and coordinate help for Ukraine.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the meeting in Brussels, the US defence secretary, Lloyd Austin, said Ukraine was facing a “pivotal moment on the battlefield” in Sievierodonetsk, with Russian forces using long-range weapons to try to overwhelm Ukrainian positions. Austin urged America and its allies not to “let up and lose steam” and to “intensify our shared commitment to Ukraine’s self-defence”. China’s Xi Jinping has assured Vladimir Putin of China’s support on Russian “sovereignty and security” prompting Washington to warn Beijing it risked ending up “on the wrong side of history”. China is “willing to continue to offer mutual support [to Russia] on issues concerning core interests and major concerns such as sovereignty and security”, the state broadcaster CCTV reported Xi as saying during a call with Putin. A US state department spokesperson responded: “China claims to be neutral, but its behaviour makes clear that it is still investing in close ties to Russia.” Turkey has said it is ready to host a meeting with the United Nations, Russia and Ukraine to organise the export of grain through the Black Sea, saying safe routes could be formed without needing to clear mines around Ukrainian ports. Ankara’s foreign minister, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, said it would “take some time” to de-mine Ukraine’s ports. “Since the location of the mines is known, certain safe lines would be established at three ports,” he said. “Ships, with the guidance of Ukraine’s research and rescue vessels as envisaged in the plan, could thus come and go safely to ports without a need to clear the mines.” Poland’s agriculture minister, Henryk Kowalczyk, said building grain silos at the Polish-Ukrainian border to channel crops to global markets would take three to four months. Kowalczyk’s remarks came after Joe Biden proposed that temporary silos would be built along the border with Ukraine in a bid to help export more grain and address a global food crisis. Two US veterans from Alabama who were fighting on Ukraine’s side haven’t been heard from in days, members of the state’s congressional delegation said. John Kirby, a national security spokesman at the White House, said: “We’ll do the best we can to monitor this and see what we can learn about it.” Europe’s unity over the war in Ukraine is at risk as public attention shifts from the battlefield to cost of living concerns, polling across 10 European countries suggests. The survey found support for Ukraine remained high but preoccupations have shifted to the conflict’s wider impacts, with the divide deepening between voters who want a swift end to the conflict and those who want Russia punished.
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HEADLINE	06/16 Noodle prices heat up; wheat supply drops
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/jun/16/noodle-prices-heat-up-as-wheat-supply-goes-to-pot
GIST	<p>The world’s hundreds of millions of noodle eaters face a rise in the price of their favourite meal as producers look set to heap surging wheat, energy and transport costs on to consumers.</p> <p>Factors ranging from the war in Ukraine to droughts and floods in the past year have combined to cause a price squeeze that could see the cost of wheat rise 30% this year in China, while also adding to already rising prices in South Korea and Japan.</p> <p>In China, the world’s largest consumer of noodles, food inflation is rising at the quickest pace for almost two years as large cities such as Shanghai open up after lockdowns.</p> <p>Widespread floods in the country’s wheat belt in 2021 have caused a shortage of the basic ingredient of noodles, exacerbated by supply chain problems and now the war in Ukraine.</p> <p>Prices of refined flour are already up more than 10% in China since the beginning of the year, to record highs, according to data from Mysteel, a China-based consultancy, and may rise further if wheat costs keep climbing.</p>

“Food flour prices have basically stabilised at the moment,” a trader with a major milling plant in China told Reuters. “But higher wheat prices will eventually be passed on to end products.”

Mama Lai and her husband have run their food stall in a small Taipei street market for more than three decades, but she has rarely seen such high price increases.

Wearing a face mask and a backwards baseball cap, Lai doles out dish after dish of noodles and soup for about 60NTD each (\$2) to queues of customers.

“Compared to past decades, I feel the noodle prices have increased a lot more in the last two to three years,” she says. “It keeps going up. I didn’t really feel the price increases until the last five years.”

The price of wheat had already risen sharply due to the coronavirus pandemic and snarl-ups in the global supply chain. But the war in Ukraine has seen the price almost double from November when it was about \$260 per tonne to about \$475 per tonne in mid-May this year.

Andrew Whitelaw, an analyst at Thomas Elders Markets in Australia, said Russia’s invasion of Ukraine took 30% of global wheat exports off the market at a stroke.

“There’s your supply shortage,” he said. “A big chunk of the cost of noodles is clearly wheat so it causes the price of noodles to rise. In bread production the cost of wheat accounts for about 10-15% of the price, but in noodles it’s potentially higher.”

Noodles are a staple for millions of people around the world, but especially in Asia. According to the World Instant Noodles Association, there are 290m servings of instant noodles eaten every day, which means 106.4bn servings a year.

China is the number one consumer with 44bn servings in 2021, followed in second place by Indonesia on 13bn serves.

The government in Jakarta is so concerned about a potential noodle shock that its economics minister raised the issue at the summit of the world’s movers and shakers in Davos last month, while shortages of buckwheat are also pushing up the cost of Japan’s famous soba noodles.

There is also concern about price rises in South Korea, which is the biggest per capita consumer of instant noodles in the world. South Korea has seen the price of wheat imports rise sharply this year, topping \$400 per tonne in May for the first time in 13 years.

The Korea Consumer Agency said that the price of the country’s popular dish kalguksu, or hot soup with flour noodles, rose 8.7% in March to a record high of more than 8,000 won (just over US\$6). Other popular noodle dishes such as naengmyeon and jajangmyeon also rose steeply in price. The national statistics office said on Sunday that its index measuring the cost of eating out rose 4.2% from December to May.

Instant noodles are also very popular in Japan but the shortage of buckwheat – a less common grain – is causing concern because it is needed to make soba noodles.

With no end in sight to the war in Ukraine, the squeeze on prices could last for some time, according to Dr Medo Pournader, a supply chain expert at the University of Melbourne, who identified a witches’ brew of interlinked problems as the cause.

As well as the loss of exports from Ukraine and Russia, the supply of fertiliser from Russia and Belarus to grow wheat has also been disrupted by the war, and rising energy prices have made production elsewhere more expensive.

	<p>“Then there are logistical problems that started during the pandemic with ports closed in China and backlogs at many other ports,” she said. “So all together it’s a huge amount of problems cascading between each other from food production to fertiliser, and energy to logistics.”</p> <p>Back in Taipei, Mama Lai says she has tried to keep price increases to a minimum but times are getting tough for everyone.</p> <p>“The price increase is still in an acceptable range for my customers,” she says. “I didn’t increase the price for many years. We earn less but we don’t lose money. My stall is for the working-class people...many are regular customers.”</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 UN OHCHR chief: limitations on China visit
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/16/un-human-rights-chief-could-not-speak-to-detained-uyghurs-or-families-during-xinjiang-visit
GIST	<p>Michelle Bachelet has said wasn’t able to speak to any detained Uyghurs or their families during her controversial visit to Xinjiang, and was accompanied by government officials while in the region.</p> <p>The UN human rights chief, who this week announced she would not be seeking another term, told a session of the 50th Human Rights Council in Geneva that there were limitations on her visit to the region in China, where authorities have been accused of committing crimes against humanity and genocide against the Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities.</p> <p>Bachelet and a team from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) spent six days in Guangdong and Xinjiang for a visit that activists and some western governments described as a propaganda coup for the Chinese government.</p> <p>In a statement on Wednesday, Bachelet said she was able to meet members of civil society organisations without government supervision, but in Xinjiang was “accompanied by government officials throughout the visit”.</p> <p>At a press conference in Guangdong held on the final day of her tour, Bachelet was asked directly by the Guardian about her ability to speak to Uyghur civilians and other people “without supervision” and to have free and open discussions about their experiences.</p> <p>At the time Bachelet said that because of the Covid bubble they weren’t able to meet everyone “but with the people we were able to speak to, it was in an unsupervised manner”.</p> <p>On Wednesday she reiterated “limitations” on the visit. “As it would be true of any high-level visit which by definition is not an investigation mission, there were limitations especially given the prevailing Covid restrictions,” she said.</p> <p>“I visited Kashgar prison plus a former so-called VETC [vocational education and training centre], where I spoke to the authorities. I was not able to speak to any Uyghurs currently detained or their families during the visit. However, in anticipation of this, I did meet with some former detainees who are now outside the country and with families who have lost contact with loved ones ahead of my visit.”</p> <p>After her visit Bachelet was criticised by rights groups, some western governments and Uyghur activists for failing to strongly condemn the Chinese government’s abuses in Xinjiang, and for using terminology favoured by the government in her press conference, including “vocational education and training centre”. VETCs are the government’s name for a network of facilities in which an estimated one million Uyghurs have been detained and allegedly subject to human rights abuses.</p>

	<p>Activists including Uyghur human rights lawyer Rayhan Asat told media their families in Xinjiang had been prevented from leaving their homes by authorities during Bachelet's visit. Asat's brother has been detained in the Xinjiang system since he disappeared in 2016.</p> <p>The OHCHR has been under pressure to release a long-awaited report on the human rights situation in China, which was completed in late 2021.</p> <p>On Wednesday during a separate address, Bachelet said her office was working on updates to their assessment of the situation in Xinjiang which would be shared with the Chinese government for comment before publication.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 WHO to rename monkeypox; avoid stigma
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/15/who-to-rename-monkeypox-virus-to-avoid-discrimination
GIST	<p>The World Health Organization has said it will rename monkeypox to avoid discrimination and stigmatisation as the virus continues to spread among people in an unprecedented global outbreak of the disease.</p> <p>Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the WHO's director general, said the organisation was "working with partners and experts from around the world on changing the name of the monkeypox virus, its clades and the disease it causes".</p> <p>The move comes after scientists called for an "urgent" change to the name which they described as "inaccurate", "discriminatory" and "stigmatising" in a report released last week. An announcement on the new name would be made "as soon as possible", said Tedros.</p> <p>Similar concerns were raised at the height of the coronavirus pandemic when new Covid variants were named after the countries or regions where they were first detected, leading to travel bans and other restrictions. In response, the WHO brought in a naming system that referred to new variants as letters of the Greek alphabet.</p> <p>In the report, the scientists raise concerns that the "prevailing perception" in the media and scientific literature is that monkeypox virus is endemic in humans in some African countries, whereas the virus is overwhelmingly found in animals, which have historically sparked occasional outbreaks when they infect people.</p> <p>The scientists warn of "an increasing narrative in the media and among many scientists that are trying to link the present global outbreak to Africa or west Africa, or Nigeria". While the UK Health Security Agency first raised the alarm after a person with monkeypox arrived in London from Nigeria on 4 May, the virus had already been spreading for some time, predominantly among men who have sex with men.</p> <p>The WHO currently refers to two types of monkeypox, namely the "west African" and the "Congo basin (central African)" clades. This year's outbreak is driven by the former type, which is substantially less dangerous than the latter.</p> <p>"In the context of the current global outbreak, continued reference to, and nomenclature of this virus being African is not only inaccurate but is also discriminatory and stigmatising," the experts write. They go on to criticise the use of photos of African patients with pox lesions in coverage of the outbreak in the global north.</p> <p>In the report, the scientists use the name "hMPXV" for human monkeypox virus as a placeholder to distinguish the virus driving the current international outbreak in humans from the virus most commonly found in animals.</p>

On Wednesday, the WHO's Europe director, Dr Hans Kluge, said the magnitude of the outbreak "poses a real risk", telling a media briefing: "The longer the virus circulates, the more it will extend its reach and the stronger the disease's foothold will get in non-endemic countries. He called on "governments, health partners and civil society" to "act with urgency" to "control this outbreak".

At the same briefing, Steve Taylor, a board member at European Pride, said LGBTQ+ events must not be closed down in light of the outbreak, but instead used to spread public health messages about monkeypox. He said about 750 Pride events were due to take place in Europe this summer.

"We have been working with the WHO over recent weeks to develop our messages and we will encourage Pride organisations across Europe to use their events to raise awareness of the facts about monkeypox so that people can protect themselves," he said. "Sadly, but entirely predictably, some of those who oppose Pride and who oppose equality and human rights have already been attempting to use monkeypox as a justification for calls for Pride to be banned.

"We are pleased the WHO guidance is clear that Pride and major events should not be affected and are, in fact, opportunities to share important public health messaging," he added.

The UKHSA announced 52 more cases of monkeypox in England on Wednesday, one more in Scotland and a further case in Wales, bringing the UK total to 524 as of 14 June. More than 1,800 cases of monkeypox have now been confirmed in dozens of countries outside Africa in the latest outbreak.

The UKHSA urged people to contact a sexual health clinic if they developed a rash with blisters and they had been in close contact, including sexual contact, with someone who has or might have had monkeypox in the past three weeks, or had been to west or central Africa in the past three weeks.

The WHO will convene an emergency meeting of experts on monkeypox next week to advise on whether the current outbreak constitutes a public health emergency of international concern, meaning it requires a coordinated response.

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HEADLINE	06/15 US: China 'wrong side history' on invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jun/15/us-china-russia-ukraine-wrong-side-history
GIST	<p>Xi Jinping has assured Vladimir Putin of China's support on Russian "sovereignty and security" prompting Washington to warn Beijing it risked ending up "on the wrong side of history".</p> <p>China has refused to condemn Moscow's invasion of Ukraine and has been accused of providing diplomatic cover for Russia by blasting western sanctions and arms sales to Kyiv.</p> <p>China is "willing to continue to offer mutual support [to Russia] on issues concerning core interests and major concerns such as sovereignty and security," state broadcaster CCTV reported Xi as saying during a call with Putin.</p> <p>It was the second reported call between the two leaders since Putin launched his invasion of Ukraine on 24 February.</p> <p>According to CCTV, Xi praised the "good momentum of development" in bilateral relations since the start of the year "in the face of global turmoil and changes".</p> <p>Beijing was willing to "intensify strategic coordination between the two countries", Xi reportedly said.</p> <p>The Kremlin said the two leaders had agreed to ramp up economic cooperation in the face of "unlawful" western sanctions.</p>

“It was agreed to expand cooperation in the energy, financial, industrial, transport and other areas, taking into account the situation in the global economy that has become more complicated due to the unlawful sanctions policy of the west,” the Kremlin said following the phone call.

But the United States swiftly weighed in with a frosty retort to Beijing’s expressed alignment with Moscow.

“China claims to be neutral, but its behavior makes clear that it is still investing in close ties to Russia,” a US state department spokesperson said.

Washington was “monitoring China’s activity closely”, including how, nearly four months into Russia’s war in Ukraine, the Asian giant was “still echoing Russian propaganda around the world” and suggesting Moscow’s atrocities in Ukraine were “staged,” the official said.

“Nations that side with Vladimir Putin will inevitably find themselves on the wrong side of history.”

The west has adopted unprecedented sanctions against Russia in retaliation for its invasion of Ukraine, and Moscow considers that Europe and the United States have thus caused a global economic slowdown.

Moscow is also looking for new markets and suppliers to replace the major foreign firms that left Russia following the invasion.

The European Union and the US have warned that any backing from Beijing for Russia’s war, or help for Moscow to dodge western sanctions, would damage ties.

Once bitter cold war enemies, Beijing and Moscow have stepped up cooperation in recent years as a counterbalance to what they see as US global dominance.

The pair have drawn closer in the political, trade and military spheres as part of what they call a “no limits” relationship.

Last week they unveiled the first road bridge linking the two countries, connecting the far eastern Russian city of Blagoveshchensk with the northern Chinese city of Heihe.

The leaders’ call on Wednesday fell on Xi’s 69th birthday and was their first reported communication since the day after Russia launched its Ukraine invasion.

Beijing is Moscow’s largest trading partner, with trade volumes last year hitting \$147bn, according to Chinese customs data.

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HEADLINE	06/15 Pakistanis told to drink less tea amid crisis
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/15/pakistanis-told-to-drink-less-tea-amid-economic-crisis
GIST	<p>A minister in Pakistan’s newly elected government has been criticised after appealing to the nation to drink less tea to help save on imports amid a deepening economic crisis.</p> <p>Pakistan is among the world’s top tea importers, and the brew is hugely popular among rich and poor. The typical Pakistani is believed to drink at least three cups a day on average.</p> <p>The government has to spend about £500m annually from the central bank’s hard currency reserves for tea imports. The prime minister, Shahbaz Sharif, who took over in April after Imran Khan was ousted in a no-confidence vote, has pledged to improve the ailing economy and meet conditions set by the International Monetary Fund in an effort to revive a £5bn bailout package.</p>

Still, the planning minister Ahsan Iqbal's plea to drink less tea surprised many. "I appeal to the people to reduce their tea drinking by one or two cups a day because we also borrow money for the tea, which is imported," Iqbal said at a press conference on Tuesday.

There were calls on social media for Iqbal to resign. Dil Sher, who owns a roadside tea stall on the outskirts of Islamabad, said: "Yesterday Ahsan Iqbal asked us to consume less tea and tomorrow they may say eat less. Is it a solution?"

The government has raised the price of fuel, natural gas and electricity by up to 45%, sending food prices soaring. Last week Sharif's cabinet presented its first budget to parliament for approval, levying more taxes on the rich and vowing to remove subsidies on energy and fuel as demanded by the IMF.

Hours-long power cuts across Pakistan have also made Sharif's coalition government unpopular. Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party, now in opposition, claimed Sharif's administration had damaged the economy barely two months since taking office. Sharif says he is paying the price for the mismanagement of his predecessor's government.

During his three and a half years in power, Khan's government also faced criticism, including when a lawmaker from his party, Riaz Fatyana, appealed for people to use less sugar and eat just one flatbread with a meal instead of more, amid a shortage of sugar and wheat. In Pakistan, most people consume roti, a flatbread similar to India's naan.

Pakistan's currency, the rupee, fell to a record low in trading against the US dollar on Wednesday. According to the central bank, the rupee slid to 206 against the dollar.

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HEADLINE	06/15 Yellowstone floods: sign of crises to come
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/15/us/yellowstone-national-park-floods.html
GIST	<p>GARDINER, Mont. — Before evacuating their rental cabin on the edge of Yellowstone National Park, the Manning family watched a nearby house plunge from the riverbank into the raging, flood-swollen waters.</p> <p>"The earth off the bank was coming off in sheets," said Parker Manning, who had traveled from Terre Haute, Ind., to Yellowstone with his family for a summer vacation.</p> <p>"It was crazy when the house, when the building, finally hit the water," Mr. Manning said. "It was floating down the river like a boat."</p> <p>The floodwaters that raged through Yellowstone this week changed the course of rivers, tore out bridges, poured through homes and forced the evacuation of thousands of visitors from the nation's oldest national park.</p> <p>It is difficult to directly connect the damage in Yellowstone to a rapidly warming climate — rivers have flooded for millennia — but scientists are raising the alarm that in the coming years destruction related to climate change will reach nearly all 423 national parks, which are particularly vulnerable to rising temperatures.</p> <p>The litany of threats read like a biblical reckoning: fire and flood, melting ice sheets, rising seas and heat waves.</p> <p>Rangers in Glacier National Park in Montana are counting down the years to when the park will have no glaciers left.</p> <p>The cactuses in Saguaro National Park in Arizona, icons of the rugged, arid West with prickly arms that reach for bright blue desert sky, are dying from the heat.</p>

Extreme heat is also a major problem in Joshua Tree National Park, where scientists are mulling a future when the park would be mostly denuded of the trees it was named after.

Joshua trees are dying from both rising temperatures and wildfires. A blaze in 2020 [killed 1.3 million trees](#), leaving the park management to describe one area as “a graveyard of Joshua tree skeletons.”

Climate change has increased temperatures across the United States. But because so many national parks are at high elevations, in the arid Southwest or in the Arctic, they are being disproportionately affected by global warming. A 2018 study found that [temperatures in national parks are rising at twice the rate](#) as the country as a whole.

“Every single one of our more than 400 national parks are suffering,” said Stephanie Kodish, the director of the climate change program at the National Parks Conservation Association, a nonprofit and nonpartisan advocacy group.

Ms. Kodish said the culprit of the extreme weather was in most cases clear: Human-caused temperature rises are destroying the very places that Americans saw as the pristine escapes from the traffic-clogged and built-up landscapes of their daily lives.

“We are literally making a choice to wipe out these things that are gems of our world, that are gifts for us to pass down,” she said.

Damage linked to climate change is occurring from Florida to Alaska.

At Everglades National Park, the vast wetlands southwest of Miami, rising sea levels are causing the salinization of groundwater, endangering tropical orchids and other endangered wildlife.

Wildfires are a constant threat during summer months in and around Yosemite National Park, the gem of the Sierra Nevada. For the past several years, visitors to the popular park have driven through vast landscapes of charred stumps. Park rangers have also been confronted by freak weather events they had never before witnessed: In January last year, gusts tore through a grove of giant sequoias and brought down 15 mature trees, wrecking recently constructed visitor facilities.

Wildfires over the past two years also killed thousands of giant sequoias in nearby Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks.

The National Park Service is experimenting with ways of adapting to the changing climate. The federal infrastructure bill passed last year has \$1.7 billion for national parks, which includes money for climate mitigation projects like relocating trails from flood zones. Other efforts include Glacier National Park biologists relocating bull trout to lower-temperature waters and staff members in Joshua Tree National Park clearing brush and invasive species from cooler or wetter areas that are more likely to sustain Joshua trees. In Yosemite, rangers are thinning forests to reduce the risk of wildfire.

Ms. Kodish said polling by the National Parks Conservation Association shows strong bipartisan support to protect the park system, which she described as “American as apple pie.”

Americans, she said, could change their everyday decisions to combat climate change and protect parks: Dry laundry on a clothesline instead of a dryer. Take public transportation. Urge their local representatives to move the country away from fossil fuels and toward renewable energy.

“People have memories built on visiting these places,” she said. “They regard them as the lifeblood of our democracy, as places that they have set aside for the commons — for us, for our kids, for our grandkids — to enjoy.”

In Yellowstone, researchers say they expect to see an increase in fires, dying forests, expanding grasslands, more invasive plants and shallower, warmer waterways.

This week's flooding will cut off the northern reaches of the park, one of the nation's most-visited natural wonders, to tourists for the rest of the busy summer travel season. And officials warned that more rain and flooding could be on the way.

By Wednesday morning, the dark skies had cleared in Livingston, Mont., a town of some 8,000 people that serves as the main northern gateway to Yellowstone.

The entire park will remain closed for a week or so while the authorities deal with damaged roads and collapsed bridges, Cam Sholly, the park's superintendent, said in a news conference late Tuesday. But the entrances to the northern section of Yellowstone, near Livingston and smaller tourist-dependent towns, will likely remain inaccessible until around Halloween.

Mr. Sholly described the floods and mudslides driven by four days of record rains and melting snow as a "thousand-year event, whatever that means these days."

"They seem to be happening more and more frequently," he said, estimating that at least 10,000 people were visiting when the evacuations began.

Millions of tourists are drawn each year to the wilderness and active geysers in Yellowstone, which [sprawls across](#) more than two million acres in the northwest corner of Wyoming and into Montana and Idaho. In 2021, [more than 4.8 million people](#) visited, a significant increase over previous years.

The storm that caused the flooding and mudslides this week began with two to three inches of rain over the weekend. Combined with warming temperatures that melted 5.5 inches of snow, the rain created the flood. Hundreds of homes were flooded in communities north of the park in Montana, including Gardiner and Cooke City, which were also cut off from supplies of food and clean water, officials said.

Floodwaters [knocked out the water plant](#) in the state's largest city, Billings, leaving less than two days of supplies for residents. On Wednesday, Montana's lieutenant governor requested [a presidential major disaster declaration](#).

Ominously, some forecasts suggest more warmth and rain in four to five days, even as another foot of snow remains on Yellowstone's mountains, raising the possibility of yet another series of floods, Mr. Sholly said.

Bill Berg, one of three commissioners in Park County, Mont., said he feared that a number of hotels and restaurants in the area might go out of business with the park's northern entrance closed for the season. Summer is when most businesses make the bulk of their money, he said.

He said this week's flooding was by far the worst he had seen in 50 years living in the area. He watched as the river swelled and carried full-grown trees downstream. On Wednesday, standing on the river's edge, he gave an inventory of the debris left behind: piles of logs, pillows, toys, cabinets and a solitary cross-country ski.

"It was ripping and roaring," he said from his home in Gardiner. "Mother Nature, she don't mess around."

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HEADLINE	06/15 New generation undocumented students
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/15/us/daca-dreamers-immigration-reform.html
GIST	LOS ANGELES — Tommy Esquivel graduated from Hollywood High School in Southern California last week with awards honoring his determination, his record of service and the highest average grade in his Advanced Placement environmental science class. "I am excited to see what you will do with your future," his science teacher, Alycia Escobedo, said in a farewell note. "Do big things."

But Mr. Esquivel, 19, who grew up in Los Angeles without legal immigration status, faces significant obstacles to realizing his potential. He has limited access to financial aid for college. In many states, he cannot obtain a driver's license. Without a Social Security number, he cannot legally work. And though he has lived in the United States since the age of 9, he could at any time face deportation to Guatemala.

For the first time, a majority of the undocumented immigrants graduating from high schools across the United States have none of the protections offered over the past 10 years under an Obama-era program that shielded most of the so-called Dreamers from deportation and offered them access to jobs and help with college tuition.

The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program was intended as a stopgap measure to protect some of the nation's most vulnerable immigrants — young people who were brought to the country as children and have grown up essentially as Americans — until Congress could agree on a comprehensive immigration overhaul or, at the least, pass a bill to offer them a path to citizenship.

During the decade since DACA took effect in June 2012, some 800,000 young people have registered. But a long-term political solution never materialized. Under constant attack by Republican immigration hawks, DACA stopped accepting new applications; it has remained mired in legal battles since President Donald J. Trump tried to quash the program in 2017.

Mr. Esquivel is among nearly 100,000 young immigrants who are entering adulthood this spring in a precarious situation — without the most basic tools to build a future in the only country many of them have ever known.

"After doing all this work, I don't know where it's going to lead me," said Mr. Esquivel, who joined his parents in the United States from Guatemala when he was in the third grade. "I don't know what I can do."

DACA, which over the years has attracted some bipartisan support because its beneficiaries are among the most sympathetic of the nation's undocumented immigrants, has been transformative for many by enabling them to work legally — and by extension afford college, build careers and buy homes. The idea among supporters was that Congress eventually would address the immigration status of the estimated 11 million people who are in the country illegally, rendering the temporary program unnecessary.

"The hope was that DACA would be a bridge to legislation, and that an administrative program would no longer be needed because there would be a statutory one," said Alejandro Mayorkas, the homeland security secretary, who led the federal agency that designed and ran the program that took effect on June 15, 2012.

"The divisiveness appears to be an obstacle even to doing things for which there is bipartisan agreement," he said in an interview.

Immigration analysts estimate that the new class of young immigrants who grew up in the United States but lack legal status or any DACA protection will grow by 100,000 each year.

Today, 60 percent of those protected by DACA are 26 or older, and even if the program survives pending legal challenges, there is no way to enroll younger immigrants like Mr. Esquivel, who arrived in 2012, unless it were amended to include them, which is unlikely given the political discord over immigration.

"For me, DACA was a crucial trial run for when we would legalize millions of people," said Gaby Pacheco, 37, a former undocumented student who led a campaign, starting in 2010, that brought the plight of Dreamers to the American public and convinced the Obama administration to provide them relief.

"Yet here we are 10 years later; it's like we regressed," said Ms. Pacheco, director of TheDream.US, a program that provides college scholarships for undocumented students.

The inability to hire tens of thousands of high school graduates comes amid a “massive shortage” of labor that has developed partly because of the country’s aging population and low birthrate, said Neil Bradley, chief policy officer for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

“Congress has had a decade to solve this issue, and it defies reason that they have not found a way forward,” he said.

Teresa Perez, 19, who immigrated to the United States from Mexico when she was 2 years old, was about to turn 15, the qualifying age to apply for DACA, when Mr. Trump rescinded the program in September 2017.

Still, Ms. Perez persevered — goaded on by her older sister, who has DACA protection — and last year was admitted to the University of Utah. She cobbled together grants from groups that did not require DACA status to cover tuition.

But after completing general education classes her first semester, she was informed that she could not enter the nursing program because she lacked a Social Security number.

“It takes a big toll on you when you have something like this impacting your life,” said Ms. Perez, who is mindful that a shortage of nurses is compelling many U.S. hospitals to recruit abroad.

Domonick, a 22-year-old undocumented student from Turks and Caicos, arrived in the United States in 2007 at the age of 7. Eight years later, he could only watch as others his age applied for DACA: He had entered the country a few days after the program’s cutoff date.

Without DACA, he cannot get a driver’s license or state identification in Florida. A scholarship from TheDream.US has enabled him to attend Florida International University. He expects to graduate in December with a degree in accounting and data analytics.

“Will I be able to find employment in my field, contribute to this country, ever live a regular life?” said Domonick, who did not want his last name used for fear of drawing attention from the authorities. “Will I have to pack up and leave the only place that I call home?”

Asians represent the fastest-growing cohort of undocumented students, and among them is James Song, who came to Chicago from South Korea on a tourist visa when he was 9 and never left.

While attending high school the past two years he has worked long hours for cash at Korean restaurants to save for college, and hopes to study biochemistry in the fall at the University of Illinois. Despite receiving some grants, he is still short.

“These issues have made it difficult for me to have hope and see into the future,” said Mr. Song, 19, who has received support from the Hana Center, a nonprofit that serves Asian immigrants.

But he cannot imagine living in any other country. “All the people I know are here,” he said. “I’m not good at reading or speaking Korean.”

Mr. Esquivel similarly grew up in Los Angeles speaking more English than Spanish.

At Hollywood High, a Southern California landmark whose graduates include the actress Judy Garland and Warren Christopher, a former secretary of state, Mr. Esquivel was admitted to the New Media Academy, a magnet program that combines college prep with training in video production and animation.

He excelled academically, joining the baseball team and campus clubs. He gave school tours. “Every kid was trying to figure out where they belong in the social ladder,” his freshman English teacher, Casey Klein, said. “Tommy was genuinely himself, nice to everyone. Never complained.”

He seldom talked about his undocumented status.

In 2020, Ms. Klein recommended him as a mentor for a summer program that eased at-risk incoming freshmen into high school, a position that paid \$15 an hour.

But the school district employment form required him to enter a Social Security number.

“The endearing thing about Tommy is that he was like, ‘I can’t get paid because of my status, but I still want to do it,’” recalled Ali Nezu, coordinator of the New Media Academy. So he did.

He mastered digital editing and became adept at using professional cameras.

“I want to be a cinematographer,” Mr. Esquivel said, “or a grip, just someone able to help around the set and fix anything that needs fixing.”

But he has had to keep passing up opportunities.

He was approached last summer about a filmmaking internship but had to decline because he is undocumented.

Early in his senior year, Ms. Nezu intended to recommend him for a paid internship at the British Academy of Film and Television Arts, one that had jump-started the careers of some Hollywood High students. When it became clear that undocumented students were not eligible, she picked another student.

On April 12, Mr. Esquivel was accepted to San Francisco State University’s School of Cinema.

Mr. Esquivel celebrated with his family and teachers. But then he took a hard look at his situation.

Most of his tuition would be covered by a state grant for which undocumented students qualify. But how was he going to afford \$17,000 in room and board with no ability to work?

He decided to enroll at a community college near Los Angeles, Santa Monica College, where he would be able to live at home.

On his last day of school on Friday, Mr. Esquivel thanked each of his teachers, his eyes moistening as they described him as a gift to the school community.

“Everybody loves you and feels good being around you,” his English teacher, Bodin Adler, said before pulling him close for a hug. “I’m really going to miss you.”

In his family’s modest apartment, Mr. Esquivel’s mother displayed his high school awards — a glass trophy, a wooden plaque and certificates — on a table.

His friend group planned a road trip to San Diego, but Mr. Esquivel decided that he better not go, lest they get stopped at a Border Patrol checkpoint.

“I feel that I am not an actual person in this country, like I can’t be a part of this country’s experience,” Mr. Esquivel said. “I feel like I could do more, but there’s limitations.”

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HEADLINE	06/16 France, Germany, Italy leaders visit Kyiv
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jun/16/france-emmanuel-macron-germany-olaf-scholz-italy-m/

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — The leaders of France, Germany, Italy and Romania arrived in Kyiv on Thursday in a show of collective European support for Ukraine as it tries to resist Russia's invasion, marking the highest-profile visit to Ukraine's capital since Russia invaded its neighbor.

The French president's office said that President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Italian Premier Mario Draghi had traveled to Kyiv together, and that Romanian President Klaus Iohannis will join them there.

After getting off the train in Kyiv, Macron said they would visit sites where attacks occurred.

"It is an important moment," he said. "It is a message of European unity toward Ukrainians."

Macron said they will speak with Ukrainian officials about "both the present and the future."

German news agency dpa quoted Scholz as saying that the leaders are seeking to show solidarity but also their commitment to keeping up their financial and humanitarian help for Ukraine, and their supply of weapons.

He added that this support would continue "for as long as is necessary for Ukraine's fight for independence," dpa reported.

Scholz said that the sanctions against Russia were also significant and could lead to Moscow withdrawing its troops.

The European leaders are to meet with Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. The economies of France, Germany and Italy are the three largest in the EU.

The leaders arrived on a special overnight train provided by the Ukrainian authorities and held long meetings in the dining car after midnight to align their positions ahead of meeting with Zelenskyy.

The visit carries heavy symbolic weight given that the three Western European powers have often faced criticism for not providing Ukraine with the scale of weaponry that Zelenskyy has been begging them for, and for their willingness to keep speaking to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Many leaders and regular people in the Baltic and Central European nations, which were controlled by Moscow during the Cold War, believe that Putin only understands force, and have viewed the efforts by Macron and others to keep speaking to Putin following his invasion as unacceptable.

Hopes were high among Ukrainians that the visit could mark a turning point by opening the way to significant new arms supplies.

The visit comes as EU leaders prepare to make a decision June 23-24 on Ukraine's request to become a candidate for EU membership, and ahead of an important NATO summit June 29-30 in Madrid.

Also Thursday, NATO defense ministers are meeting in Brussels to weigh more military aid for Ukraine. On Wednesday, the U.S. and Germany announced more aid, as America and its allies provide longer-range weapons they say can make a difference in a fight where Ukrainian forces are outnumbered and outgunned by their Russian invaders.

On Tuesday, during a trip to Ukraine's neighbors Romania and Moldova, Macron said a "message of support" must be sent to Ukraine before EU heads of state and government "have to make important decisions" at their Brussels meeting.

"We are in a moment where we need to send clear political signals — we, Europeans, we the European Union — toward Ukraine and the Ukrainian people," he said.

	<p>Macron is deeply involved in diplomatic efforts to push for a cease-fire in Ukraine that would allow future peace negotiations. He has frequent discussions with Zelenskyy and has spoken on the phone several times with Russian President Vladimir Putin since Putin launched the invasion in late February.</p> <p>Scholz had long resisted traveling to Kyiv, saying he didn't want to "join the queue of people who do a quick in-out for a photo opportunity." Instead, Scholz said a trip should focus on doing "concrete things."</p> <p>Germany on Wednesday announced that it will provide Ukraine with three multiple launch rocket systems of the kind that Kyiv has said it urgently needs to defend itself against Russia's invasion.</p> <p>Defense Minister Christine Lambrecht said Germany will transfer three M270 medium-range artillery rocket systems along with ammunition to Ukraine.</p> <p>Lambrecht, speaking on the sidelines of a meeting of NATO defense ministers in Brussels, said that training of Ukrainian soldiers in Germany on advanced howitzers whose delivery Berlin had already announced will soon be completed.</p> <p>She said the multiple launch rocket systems can be delivered in late July or early August following training on that equipment.</p> <p>Lambrecht has said that Germany expects the systems to have "a swift and significant battlefield impact."</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Panic sets in after months of high prices
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jun/15/panic-sets-after-months-high-prices-how-high-it-go/
GIST	<p>JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — Record-high gasoline prices, coupled with rapidly rising costs for food and other goods, have begun to cripple individuals and families at the lower end of the income scale, sending them in droves to food banks and other charities.</p> <p>Some people are virtually stranded at home, unable to travel anywhere because they cannot afford to fuel their cars.</p> <p>Amy, a mother of two who lives in Callahan, Florida, near the border with Georgia, said she spent \$110 Monday at a local gas station, where a gallon of regular gasoline costs \$4.81. She then hit the grocery store, where she pushed her cart past many of the items her family needed because she couldn't afford them.</p> <p>She said she left the grocery store feeling "ripped off" — and panicked.</p> <p>"We're just very, very careful," Amy, who did not want her last name used, said as she broke down in tears. "And it almost scares me to the point where it's like, how high is it going to go?"</p> <p>Consumer prices rose by 8.6% in May over last year's figures, higher than economists expected and up from 8.3% in April. The latest numbers shattered hopes that inflation, which has been climbing for months, was finally beginning to slow.</p> <p>President Biden acknowledged the rising costs in a speech Tuesday at the AFL-CIO convention in Philadelphia. He told the crowd that inflation "is sapping the strength of a lot of families." He did not take credit for the crisis and instead blamed Republicans for blocking additional federal spending and tax increases that Mr. Biden said would lower costs for working families.</p> <p>Mr. Biden told the union crowd that Russia's invasion of Ukraine triggered higher fuel prices. "I'm doing everything in my power to blunt Putin's gas price hike," he said.</p>

The president said he has a plan to bring down the costs of gas and food that includes tapping the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, persuading other countries to release emergency oil and helping export grain trapped in war-torn Ukraine.

“It’s going to take time,” Mr. Biden said.

In the meantime, more people are turning to food banks in desperation.

On a recent morning, cars lined up with their trunks open at Authentic Impact food pantry in Yulee, Florida, a few miles northeast of Jacksonville. Volunteers loaded boxes of food while outreach coordinator John Sauer scanned statistics on his phone that showed a drastic increase in the number of people seeking help from the pantry over the past few months, averaging a 57% increase over last year.

He blamed the rapid rise in prices for just about everything.

“There were people that were making it month to month,” Mr. Sauer said. “And all of a sudden, with the gas prices and the groceries, they just fell off a cliff and they come here.”

Sami Speaker, 83, a widow who lives a few miles away from the food bank, pulled up with a quarter of a tank of gas left. Mrs. Speaker said it costs \$85 to fully fuel her car and she can no longer afford soaring food prices. She now rarely leaves the house and has stopped making the trips to Jacksonville that she used to enjoy.

“It’s getting hard for me to get gas to get the free food,” Mrs. Speaker said. “It’s gotten where I can’t go anywhere now. I just sit at home.”

Julie, a server at the Ritz Carlton in Fernandina Beach, said she makes decent tips but not enough income to cover rent and higher prices for necessities.

She decided to go back to the food bank. “I have not come for years,” Julie said. “I make good money, but it’s still not enough.”

A few miles up the road, Yulee Baptist Church is operating a food pantry. Administrator Michelle Springer said the number of people seeking help from the food bank has increased by 25% in recent weeks.

“It’s obviously food inflation, and gas,” Mrs. Springer said. “People are just paying more for everything.”

More bad economic news arrived this week.

The Labor Department announced that the Producer Price Index, which measures the costs of wholesale goods before they make it to store shelves, rose 10.8% in May over the previous year, largely because of higher fuel costs. Consumer goods rose 1.4% in May, marking five months of increases.

The Federal Reserve raised interest rates by three-quarters of a percentage point Wednesday, the biggest increase in nearly three decades, in an effort to tame inflation.

On the day The Washington Times visited Mr. Sauer’s food bank, volunteers had given away 460 boxes of food by noon and planned to keep it open for another hour and a half. The food bank reopens at 5 p.m., when more cars typically arrive.

The food bank provided food for 832 families last week and needs more donations, Mr. Sauer said.

“I think we are headed toward nothing better,” he said about the economy.

HEADLINE	06/15 New monthly record illegal border jumpers
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jun/15/biden-sets-new-monthly-record-illegal-border-jumpe/
GIST	<p>Border authorities nabbed nearly 240,000 illegal immigrants at the southern border in May, according to numbers released late Wednesday that show the month marked a new record level of chaos for the Biden administration.</p> <p>Just 42% of those were expelled under the Title 42 pandemic emergency policy, while the rest were processed under normal immigration rules — which under the Biden administration usually means being released into communities to await eventual court proceedings.</p> <p>All of the key categories showed increases, from unaccompanied juveniles, which surged 21% in May, to migrants traveling as families, which rose 8%.</p> <p>Customs and Border Protection (CBP) tallied nearly 12,000 people detained in its facilities on any given day in May, topping March's previous high.</p> <p>And the number of unique encounters — migrants who haven't tried to cross in the last 12 months — also surged 15% in May, to 177,793.</p> <p>That is particularly worrying for border authorities who had insisted the bad numbers under Mr. Biden were artificially inflated by recidivists.</p> <p>CBP Commissioner Chris Magnus pleaded with migrants to think twice before trying the journey.</p> <p>"The terrain along the Southwest Border is extreme, the summer heat is severe, and the miles of desert that migrants must hike after crossing the border are unforgiving," he said. "Our message to those who would try and gain illegal entry to the United States remains the same – don't make the dangerous journey only to be sent back."</p> <p>The problem is that increasingly, migrants aren't sent back.</p> <p>CBP reported releasing more than 20,000 illegal border-crossers outright, and transferring nearly 74,000 more to other federal agencies who were expected to release almost all of them.</p> <p>On the other hand, drug seizures did drop across all four major categories of heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine and fentanyl.</p> <p>Seizures, like arrests of migrants, are considered a rough yardstick of the overall flow. So the drop in drug seizures likely means fewer drugs are getting through undetected.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 US struggles to hold allied unity on Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jun/15/western-solidarity-tested-europeans-divided-over-i/
GIST	<p>Cracks are deepening across Europe over how to handle the Russia-Ukraine endgame, according to data released Wednesday, as a growing number of Europeans favor immediate peace over the continuation of a hard-line anti-Russia stance that has defined Western policy since the start of the war nearly four months ago.</p> <p>Former NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said Europe has hit a "fork in the road" with respect to the war in Ukraine. He acknowledged that rifts have emerged as the fighting drags on, casualties mount, and food and fuel prices skyrocket around the world. Other former NATO officials warned some European leaders — presumably those in Italy and Hungary, the most vocal proponents of an immediate cease-fire — against pushing Ukraine "into a bad peace" and offering any concessions to the aggressor, Russian President Vladimir Putin.</p>

Even as NATO defense officials gathered in Brussels on Wednesday to map out the next round of assistance to the Ukrainian military and as President Biden announced another \$1 billion U.S. military aid package, it became increasingly clear that the European public is rapidly growing weary of war and wants its leaders to push for peace.

Ukrainian officials, led by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, have said they are fighting to oust Russia from every inch of Ukrainian territory, including the Crimean Peninsula, which Mr. Putin annexed eight years ago. Mr. Zelenskyy's goal was spurred by early victories by Kyiv. U.S. and NATO officials have repeatedly said they would back any peace deal that is acceptable to the Zelenskyy government.

Complicating that message are statements from world leaders. President Biden insisted that Mr. Putin must step down from power, and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said Russia must be "weakened" and incapable of such aggression again.

A study by the European Council on Foreign Relations published Wednesday found that a plurality of Europeans, about 35%, favor "peace now even at the cost of Ukrainian concessions to Russia." The startling figure strongly suggests that Europe's appetite to hold Moscow accountable for the war may be crumbling.

The survey was conducted in mid-May and sampled 8,000 Europeans.

About 22% of respondents said "justice" is the most important consideration. They say only Russia's clear defeat can bring about peace. Another 23% declined to choose between those options, and 20% were classified as swing voters.

The survey showed extreme differences from one country to another. For example, 52% of the Italian public and 49% of the German public favor immediate peace, but just 16% of Polish citizens share that view. Instead, 41% of Poles say defeating Russia is the No. 1 priority and the only path to peace, compared with 19% of Germans and 16% of Italians.

In France, 41% called for peace and just 20% fell into the "justice" category. In Britain, the public was split, with 22% calling for immediate peace and 21% saying Russia must be defeated. The remaining 39% of French citizens and 58% of Britons either declined to choose or were classified as swing voters, according to the report.

"The findings of the poll suggest that European public opinion is shifting, and that the toughest days may lie ahead. The resilience of European democracies will mostly depend on the capacity of governments to sustain public support for policies that will ultimately bring pain to different social groups," the European Council on Foreign Relations said in a statement accompanying its report. "The survey reveals a growing gap between the stated positions of many European governments and the public mood in their countries. The big looming divide is between those who want to end the war as quickly as possible and those who want to carry on fighting until Russia has been defeated."

Fueling the divide is the transformation of the conflict into a bloody slog in Ukraine's eastern Donbas region. Russian forces are waging a war of attrition against an outgunned and outmanned Ukrainian military. The fiercest fighting has been in and around Sievierodonetsk, a key strategic city that remains contested despite weeks of an unrelenting Russian assault. The Ukrainian governor of the Luhansk province, Serhiy Haidai, told The Associated Press on Wednesday that the situation inside the city is growing worse.

"But our military is holding back the enemy from three sides at once," he said. "The enemy is advancing because of significant advantage in artillery and people, but the Ukrainian army is holding on to its positions in the city."

Russian troops reportedly hit weapons depots in western Ukraine in a bid to stop badly needed guns, ammunition and equipment from reaching the front lines in the Donbas. Mr. Zelenskyy said in a Tuesday evening video address that his troops will keep fighting.

“The losses, unfortunately, are painful, but we have to hold out,” he said. “The more losses the enemy suffers there, the less strength it will have to continue the aggression. Therefore, the Donbas is key to determining who will dominate in the coming weeks.”

Arming Ukraine

Mr. Zelenskyy spoke by phone with Mr. Biden on Wednesday. Shortly afterward, the U.S. president announced the latest American aid package.

“I informed President Zelenskyy that the United States is providing another \$1 billion in security assistance for Ukraine, including additional artillery and coastal defense weapons, as well as ammunition for the artillery and advanced rocket systems that the Ukrainians need to support their defensive operations in the Donbas,” Mr. Biden said in a statement released by the White House.

The latest U.S. shipment includes artillery rocket munitions, 18 additional M-77 howitzers and the tactical vehicles to tow them, and 36,000 rounds of 155 mm howitzer ammunition.

Mr. Austin announced the details during a press conference at NATO headquarters in Brussels.

“Ukraine is facing a pivotal moment on the battlefield,” Mr. Austin said. “We’re seeing what [Mr. Zelenskyy] warned us about: After failing to take Kyiv and after reassessing its combat aims, Russia has shifted its focus to the Donbas.”

European leaders also have vowed to ramp up weapons shipments to Ukraine, but growing public calls for immediate peace will surely complicate those efforts. Former NATO officials say some European governments are making a grave mistake by appearing to weaken their stance toward Russia.

“Politically, NATO allies could also do much more. First of all, we could strengthen deterrence ... by keeping all options on the table,” former NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said Wednesday at a virtual forum hosted by the Atlantic Council, a leading Washington think tank.

“To my mind, many NATO leaders have been too eager to exclude this or that action,” he said. “I think we should keep our adversary in uncertainty. That’s the most efficient deterrent. And NATO allies should not push Ukraine into a bad peace. It’s only for the Ukrainians, it’s for President Zelenskyy and his government to decide the terms of a cease-fire or a peace deal.”

Mr. Rasmussen’s comments seem to have been a direct response to the public positions of Italy and Hungary, which late last month pushed the European Union to call for a cease-fire in Ukraine and direct peace talks with Mr. Putin. That position seemed to break from those of other key EU members, which have publicly insisted that helping Ukraine defeat Russia and push Russian forces out of Ukrainian territory must be the overarching goal.

Mr. Scheffer said those opposing viewpoints are coming to a head.

“I think politically, we might be at a fork in the road,” he said at the Atlantic Council event. “And I see from time to time our leaders in NATO and in the European Union making comments which give me the impression that they’re not always singing from the same hymn sheet.”

He acknowledged the wildly different views of the Russian threat across Europe.

“If you’re living in Poland or living in the Baltic states, the threat is perceived differently than when you live in the Hague or in Madrid or in Rome, for that matter,” he said.

HEADLINE	06/16 Life in Mariupol under Russia occupation
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/16/ukraine-life-in-mariupol-under-russian-occupation
GIST	<p>A month after the end of the siege at Mariupol's Azovstal steelworks, which marked the Russian capture of the coastal city, life continues without access to basic amenities. Those who were left behind are largely cut off from the outside world with limited mobile phone and internet connection.</p> <p>"It was worse than hell there. There are no words to describe it," said 55-year-old Vladimir Korchma, who had lived all of his life in Mariupol where he worked as a machinist at a local factory.</p> <p>"We had no gas or electricity. Only the lucky ones had water," said Korchma, who left the city at the end of May.</p> <p>Korchma, a sturdy man with piercing blue eyes, spoke outside the help centre in Kyiv for people fleeing Mariupol. The centre, which provides food and organises housing, is the first port of call for many who had left the city.</p> <p>Korchma proceeded to open his phone to show images of a destroyed apartment block, as did many of his fellow ex-Mariupol residents, all desperate to show the impact of Russia's invasion on their lives.</p> <p>"This was our home," said Korchma, pointing to the screen. "Now it is in ruins. I would never have believed that I would be homeless at 55."</p> <p>Contact with his brother and others who stayed in Mariupol is very difficult but not impossible, Korchma said. Internet and phone provider Kyivstar stopped working at the end of March, and Korchma said his brother had to walk to the outskirts of town to find a signal.</p> <p>Russia has been eager to fill the information vacuum experienced in Mariupol by bringing vans with large mounted screens into the captured city. The "mobile information complexes", as Russia calls them, play state TV news segments and political chat shows where pundits support the invasion.</p> <p>"They had put those screens around all the main squares," said Katerina, who asked for her last name to be withheld because she was currently in the Russian border town of Rostov-on-Don after leaving Mariupol on the 6 May. "When my mother and I were in line to get food and water, we were forced to listen to stories about how we were being liberated from Nazis," she added.</p> <p>Russian state media have eagerly announced that the sign welcoming people to Mariupol has been replaced with one painted in the colours of the Russian flag.</p> <p>"De-Nazification has been a success in Mariupol," wrote Vladimir Solovyov, one of Russian state TV's main presenters.</p> <p>More reports from the city, even from those who supported the war, have painted a far less rosy picture. Even months after the Kremlin claimed to have near-total control of the city, Russian media have done little to hide the dire state of affairs in Mariupol.</p> <p>"Residents of the destroyed Mariupol are cooking broth from pigeons on bonfires in their courtyard," Russia's state-owned NTV reported from the city late in May. Much of the city lacks electricity and water, those reports said.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the deteriorating health situation and lack of medicine are making matters worse.</p> <p>Back at the help centre, Oleh said that shortly before leaving the city on 2 May, he brought his younger brother to the dentist after his sibling experienced weeks of "agonising" tooth pain while hiding in the bunkers.</p>

While there, they discovered that the dentist had run out of anaesthetics. “His tooth infection was spreading so they had to do something. They took his tooth out without anaesthesia. He screamed and screamed,” Oleh said.

There are now fears that cholera and other deadly diseases could kill many more people, as corpses lie uncollected and the summer brings warmer weather. “The smell in the city was just so intense wherever you went,” said Katerina.

Videos posted on the Telegram channel “Mariupol Now” – which was set up by a Ukrainian volunteer to get information out of the city – show disturbing scenes. In one particularly gruesome picture, which the channel said was taken a few days ago, dozens of bodies are seen lying in a parking lot.

Petro Andryushchenko, an adviser to the Ukrainian mayor of Mariupol, recently estimated that 22,000 died in the two months of fighting, while a person coordinating burials in the city told the Guardian that the number could be closer to 50,000.

While pro-Russian separatists have pledged to rebuild the city into a “resort”, the economy appears to be at a standstill with long queues for food and humanitarian help everywhere.

“Think about the end of the Soviet Union, but five times worse,” said 54-year-old Tatiana, who left Mariupol in April but has been in touch with her sister and mother who are still there.

Soon after the pro-Russian separatists came, Tatiana said the “occupiers” promised locals that their outstanding pensions would be paid out, but Tatiana and others said that very few in the city had received any payments.

Instead, she said, pro-Russian officials ordered that only those who had traded their Ukrainian passports for Russian ones could apply for benefits. Pro-Russia separatists had earlier announced that they had started handing out Russian passports in Kherson and Melitopol, two occupied cities west of Mariupol.

“A never-ending stream of pain,” is how Anna Chasovnikova, the psychologist at the help centre, described her therapy sessions with those who have left Mariupol.

“One of the biggest problems is that people are struggling to accept that their past lives are gone forever. They can’t look forward anymore,” said Chasovnikova, who herself left the city at the very beginning of the war.

She admitted that, despite being an experienced psychologist, she often found it hard to help her patients, who were coming to her with stories that “were unimaginable for the 21st century”.

“What do you say when a girl tells you how her father was blown up in front of her during his own birthday celebration?” she asked.

Chasovnikova said her patients also had a hard time understanding why a country that many in Mariupol had considered a friendly neighbour “could do such a thing”.

Mariupol, just 60km (37miles) from the Russian border, is a largely Russian-speaking city where both economic and family ties with Moscow run deep. “In the end,” Chasovnikova said, “I tell them that these are the actions of a schizophrenic president. And maybe there is just no point trying to understand him.”

The help centre has conducted daily animal-assisted therapy sessions. At the centre, one family sat in a circle, patting an excited labradoodle.

“It helps the children and their parents to forget about the past, at least for an hour,” Chasovnikova said.

	<p>About 90,000 people remain in Mariupol, compared with its pre-war population of 500,000, many of whom were too old to leave or didn't want to abandon their homes.</p> <p>"Ukrainians are very attached to their belongings," Chasovnikova explained. "Some of those who stayed just didn't want to leave their houses."</p> <p>But there was also some resentment felt towards those with pro-Russia sentiments who stayed.</p> <p>Nadia, a former boxing coach in Mariupol who left for Kyiv in March, said she knew of several men who were part of her gym that had welcomed the Russian forces and had since stayed. "Well, now enjoy living in it," she said.</p> <p>For Korchma, the machinist, and others who moved to Kyiv, a long and uncertain road lies ahead.</p> <p>While he said he was grateful for the apartment that he and his family had received in the capital, he "longed" for the days he could return to his hometown.</p> <p>"I had a purpose there, we built a life. Things weren't perfect, but they worked," he said. "It was all taken from us."</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Ukraine ignores Russian ultimatum
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/15/ukraine-ignores-russian-ultimatum-to-surrender-sievierodonetsk
GIST	<p>Ukraine has ignored a Russian ultimatum to surrender the embattled eastern city of Sievierodonetsk, as fears grow over the hundreds of civilians trapped in the city's Azot chemical factory.</p> <p>Russia ordered Ukrainian forces a day earlier to stop "senseless resistance and lay down arms" from Wednesday morning, as Moscow controls 80% of Sievierodonetsk, a city that has become a focal point of Russia's advances in the east of the country.</p> <p>Moscow on Wednesday also accused Ukraine of disrupting plans to open a humanitarian corridor for civilians to leave the area. The evacuation planned to bring civilians from the Azot plant to Svatove, a city north of Sievierodonetsk controlled by pro-Russian forces, and Ukraine had not publicly commented on Moscow's proposal.</p> <p>More than 500 civilians, including 40 children, are trapped inside the Azot factory. Weeks of Russia's relentless bombardment of Sievierodonetsk, including its industrial area, have reduced much of the city to rubble. The shelling of the Azot plant echoes the earlier bloody siege of the Azovstal steelworks in the southern port of Mariupol, where hundreds of fighters and civilians took shelter from Russian shelling.</p> <p>Saviano Abreu, a spokesperson for the UN's humanitarian affairs office, described the situation in Azot as a "huge concern". "The lack of water and sanitation is a big worry. It's a huge concern for us because people cannot survive for long without water," he told the BBC.</p> <p>In its latest intelligence briefing, Britain's defence ministry said elements of Ukraine's armed forces as well as several hundred civilians were sheltering in underground bunkers in the Azot plant. Ukraine has not publicly acknowledged that members of its armed forces were sheltering there, and it was not possible to verify the claim.</p> <p>Russia continues to make gains in Sievierodonetsk, a key city in Russia's push for full control of the eastern Luhansk region. The mayor of Sievierodonetsk, Oleksandr Stryuk, told Ukrainian television on Wednesday afternoon that Russian forces were trying to "push towards the city centre".</p> <p>"This is an ongoing situation with partial successes and tactical retreats," Stryuk said.</p>

Meanwhile, Serhiy Haidai, the governor of the Luhansk region, wrote on Facebook that 75 people had been evacuated from Sievierodonetsk, despite the three bridges that led out of the city being destroyed.

“The evacuation is extremely difficult because the shelling does not subside. Police officers and volunteers were able to successfully evacuate 75 people, and all of them are safe,” he said. “We will not stop, as long as there is such an opportunity to evacuate people.”

Off the battlefield, Joe Biden announced a new package of arms and ammunition worth \$1bn (£825m) for Ukraine, including more artillery, coastal anti-ship defence systems and ammunition for artillery and advanced rocket systems that Ukraine is already using.

In the phone call with Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, Biden said he reaffirmed his “commitment that the United States will stand by Ukraine as it defends its democracy, and support its sovereignty and territorial integrity in the face of unprovoked Russian aggression”, according to a US statement.

Biden also announced \$225m worth of humanitarian assistance.

Meanwhile, Ukraine continued its pursuit of more European support as Nato defence ministers gathered in Brussels.

“Brussels, we are waiting for a decision,” Mykhailo Podolyak, a senior adviser to Zelenskiy, wrote on Twitter.

Anna Malyar, the country’s deputy defence minister, said Ukraine had received just 10% of the weapons it had requested from the west. “No matter how hard Ukraine tries, no matter how professional our army is, without the help of western partners we will not be able to win this war,” she said.

In Russia, where Putin is expected to make a major speech on Friday during the annual St Petersburg international economic forum, a rare voice of public anti-war dissent emerged from Igor Denisov, the former captain of the country’s football team.

“These events are catastrophic. It’s horrific. I am not sure if I will be jailed or killed for this, but I am saying it as it is,” Denisov said in an interview with a sports journalist. Denisov’s statements made him the most senior Russian former or current athlete who was still in Moscow to have spoken out against the war.

His comments came as Dmitry Medvedev, Russia’s former president and a close Putin ally, further escalated his rhetoric against Ukraine, writing on his Telegram channel: “Who said Ukraine is even going to exist on the world map in two years?”

It was the latest in a string of statements by senior Russian officials that questioned Ukraine’s statehood. A day earlier, Russia’s space chief, Dmitry Rogozin, called on Russia to “finish off” Ukraine “once and for all”.

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HEADLINE	06/15 Seattle deadliest street: Aurora Ave. North
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/study-says-seattles-deadliest-street-is-aurora-avenue-north/ACYFH7YUUNHUJDCMK4VWH4NX7RM/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — A study released last week shows that 17% of all traffic fatalities across Seattle happen on Aurora Avenue North.</p> <p>The study by the Seattle Department of Transportation included five years of data from Jan. 1, 2015, to Dec. 31, 2019.</p>

	<p>It says pedestrians were only involved in 5% of all collisions but were half of all fatalities.</p> <p>Since the end of the study period in 2019, SDOT says eight more people have died on Aurora, six of whom were pedestrians.</p> <p>Other takeaways from the study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 88 people were seriously hurt in 45 collisions. • People biking and walking were more likely to be seriously hurt. • 55% of collisions happened at intersections. • 45% occur between intersections. • 88% of pedestrian fatalities occur between intersections. • Some sections of Aurora do not have sidewalks. • Problems along Aurora include long blocks, gaps between crosswalks with traffic signals and not enough pedestrian connections to transit facilities. <p>SDOT is conducting a long-range planning study “to define future vision and cross sections for 7.6-mile Aurora corridor.” The main focus of the project is pedestrian and bicycle access safety upgrades and transit improvements.</p> <p>The budget for the planning project is \$2 million, including a \$1.5 million Washington State Department of Transportation pedestrian and bike program planning grant. The focus of the grant is upgrades to non-motorized transportation.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Mich. floods halt baby formula production
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/trending/baby-formula-shortage-abbotts-michigan-plant-halts-production-specialty-formula-amid-floods/JI25VFXHYRA75BV27YPMFUP4II/
GIST	<p>STURGIS, Mich. — Less than two weeks after Abbott restarted production of specialty baby formula at its plant in Sturgis, Michigan, flooding has forced the facility to again halt production amid a nationwide shortage, officials said.</p> <p>“Severe thunderstorms and heavy rains came through southwestern Michigan on Monday evening, resulting in high winds, hail, power outages and flood damage throughout the area. These torrential storms produced significant rainfall in a short period of time – overwhelming the city’s stormwater system in Sturgis, Mich., and resulting in flooding in parts of the city, including areas of our plant,” Abbott, the country’s largest formula manufacturer, said in a news release Wednesday.</p> <p>“As a result, Abbott has stopped production of its EleCare specialty formula that was underway to assess damage caused by the storm and clean and re-sanitize the plant.”</p> <p>The company, which informed the U.S. Food and Drug Administration of its decision, added that the facility will undergo “comprehensive testing” with an “independent third party” to make sure the plant can resume operations.</p> <p>“This will likely delay production and distribution of new product for a few weeks,” the release said.</p> <p>Before production resumed June 4, the plant had been closed for months after a January FDA inspection found “significant operational deficiencies” and <i>Cronobacter sakazakii</i>, a bacterium that could expose babies to a severe foodborne illness, NBC News previously reported. The discovery prompted a recall of EleCare, Alimentum and Similac formulas that, when combined with supply chain issues, led to a nationwide shortage, according to CNN.</p> <p>Despite the latest weather-related setback, Abbott said it “has ample existing supply of EleCare” and other specialty formulas “to meet needs” until the plant is back online.</p>

	<p>“These products are being released to consumers in need in coordination with health care professionals,” the company said in the release, adding that caregivers should contact their doctor or Abbott at 1-800-881-0876 to learn more.</p> <p>FDA Commissioner Robert Califf took to Twitter late Wednesday to address Abbott’s announcement, according to CNN.</p> <p>“Today, we were made aware of the weather-related situation at Abbott’s Sturgis, Mich., facility. I personally spoke to the CEO tonight and we discussed our shared desire to get the facility up and running again as quickly as possible,” he wrote. “While this is an unfortunate setback and a reminder that natural weather events can also cause unforeseen supply chain disruptions, I want to reassure consumers the all-of-government work to increase supply means we’ll have more than enough product to meet current demand.”</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Inland Northwest flood concerns remain
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/weather/krem-2-weather-forecast/293-a0f43ff2-aa37-4afc-bcfc-b661849f38c1
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. — Flood warnings and areal flood advisories remain in place for flooding across the Inland Northwest. Hardest hit areas are the Palouse River from Potlach, ID to Palouse WA. The river has crested over the road and into town. Along the Pend Oreille River downstream of the Albeni Falls minor flooding continues. The Moyie River in Bonner County is experiencing minor flooding, similarly in St. Maries, the St. Joe River is at minor flood stage. Elsewhere it's poor drainage and low-lying areas with ponding (small pools of water).</p> <p>In Spokane, we've already received more than 2.6 inches of rain in the month of June alone. That's more than the monthly total (about double) in less than just 2 weeks. It's a similar story across the region. Good news! We start drying out Tuesday evening. Finally. By Wednesday it's sunshine and rising temps for everyone. We stay dry through Friday with temperatures climbing to near 80 on Friday! Unfortunately, all of that warmth on Friday precedes a round of scattered thunderstorms Friday night that ushers in another round of wet weather.</p> <p>The weekend... we won't talk about the weekend.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Missing: 2 Americans fighting in Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/06/15/world/ukraine-russia-news#americans-missing-ukraine
GIST	<p>Two U.S. veterans who volunteered to fight in Ukraine have gone missing, their families said on Wednesday.</p> <p>One man was named Alex Drueke, 39, a former U.S. Army staff sergeant who served two tours in Iraq, his family said in a statement. The other was named Andy Tai Ngoc Huynh, 27, a former Marine, Darla Black, the mother of Mr. Huynh’s fiancée, Joy Black, said in a phone interview.</p> <p>The U.S. State Department said on Wednesday that it was “aware of unconfirmed reports of two U.S. citizens captured in Ukraine.”</p> <p>“We are closely monitoring the situation and are in contact with Ukrainian authorities,” a State Department spokesperson said. “Due to privacy considerations, we have no further comment.”</p> <p>Mr. Drueke and Mr. Huynh disappeared together when their platoon came under “heavy fire” on June 9, leading all its members to fall back except for the two of them, according to a statement sent by Mr. Drueke’s family. Reconnaissance by foot and drone did not turn up any sign of the two soldiers, the statement continued.</p>

“This could mean they are in hiding or it could mean they have been captured,” said Mr. Drueke’s mother, Bunny Drueke. She added in an email that “intercepted communications” indicated the two Americans might have been captured, but that had not been confirmed.

The two men, if captured, would be the first Americans known to have become prisoners of war during the conflict.

The Drueke family was notified of the search for the two missing Americans by another member of the platoon on Monday, the family’s statement said.

“When Russia invaded Ukraine, Alex immediately told me he wanted to go use his skills to train Ukrainians in how to operate American weaponry,” said Mrs. Drueke. “He isn’t married, he doesn’t have kids, and he has the training and the experience. He felt it was his duty to help defend democracy, wherever needed.”

The statement described Mr. Drueke as an avid hiker who before the war had been living on family land in rural western Alabama while hoping to plan “a new adventure” with his Mastiff rescue, Diesel.

In an interview with WAAY-TV, an ABC affiliate in northern Alabama, Mr. Huynh, who was identified as living in a small city in the region, Hartselle, and being from Orange County, Calif., said that he had decided to travel to Ukraine and fight after seeing 18-year-olds fighting for their freedom.

“I know there’s a potential of me dying,” he said. “I’m willing to give my life for what I believe is right.”

Before going to Ukraine, Mr. Huynh studied robotics at a local college that Joy also attended, Ms. Black said. He had been in the Marines for four years, entering right after graduating from high school.

“Andy didn’t make the easy choice, he made the right choice,” Joy said through sobs in a phone interview. “Andy did not go there for an adventure. He just wanted to help.”

Both the Black and Drueke families said they had last heard from the men on June 8, when each said they would be out of reach for a few days.

“Alex’s family has become our family,” Ms. Black said. “If there is anyone who understands how my daughter feels right now, it’s Alex’s mother, so we all feel connected.”

An Alabama congressional delegation — including Senators Richard Shelby and Tommy Tuberville, as well as Representatives Terri Sewell and Robert Aderholt, who represent the men’s districts — is coordinating with the State Department, said Ms. Sewell’s chief of staff, Hilary Beard. A spokesperson for Gov. Kay Ivey added that the delegation was also working with the F.B.I.

Since the war began on Feb. 24, an unknown number of foreigners have volunteered to help Ukraine in various ways, among them hundreds of American military veterans who have sought to join combat. The State Department reiterated in its statement that U.S. citizens should not travel to Ukraine.

There have been no confirmed reports of Americans being captured, and only one American has been reported dead: Willy Joseph Cancel Jr., 22, a former Marine infantryman from Kentucky who was killed on April 24 or 25 when his unit was overrun by Russian troops, Mr. Cancel’s uncle, Christopher Cancel, said in an interview with The New York Times.

Western governments and human rights groups were rattled last week when a court in Russia-occupied eastern Ukraine sentenced two Britons and a Moroccan man to death, accusing them of being mercenaries.

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HEADLINE	06/16 Minority group ambivalent on Ukraine war
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/16/world/europe/ethnic-hungarians-ukraine-war.html

TRANSCARPATHIA, Ukraine — Beneath dark clouds unleashing a summer rain, officials in a southwestern Ukrainian border village gathered silently, slowly hanging wreaths on branches to commemorate the destruction of a nation.

The wreaths were not decorated with the yellow and blue of the Ukrainian flag; they were laced, instead, with the red, white and green of Hungary's. And the nation they honored this month was not their besieged country, but a homeland from their collective history, torn up more than 100 years ago.

Transcarpathia — now a hardscrabble region of Ukraine bordering Hungary — has been home to as many as 150,000 ethnic Hungarians who, through the complex horse-trading, conquests and boundary adjustments of over a century of European geopolitics, ended up within Ukraine's borders.

Before the [war with Russia](#), the yearnings of Ukraine's Hungarian minority were mostly brushed off as benign nostalgia for a time when they lived in one nation with other ethnic Hungarians. Now, divided loyalties within the tiny community — which has soaked up Hungary's ambivalence toward Russia's invasion — are being seen as something more worrisome by their fellow Ukrainians, some of whom fear they are susceptible to pro-Russia propaganda from Hungary.

The ambivalence some feel is a reminder of the trouble that Hungary's authoritarian leader, [Viktor Orban](#), is able to cause for his neighbors, in this case by playing on ethnic Hungarians' feelings of discrimination by their government. And it adds another layer of complexity for Ukraine's leaders as they try to keep their sprawling, multiethnic country united in the face of a brutal Russian invasion, even as they struggle to win allegiance from minorities including ethnic Russians and Hungarians.

"It's like being on a football field between two opposing teams," said David Arpad, a pastor who was leading one of the commemorations for the lost Hungarian homeland, which were kept small to avoid stoking more tensions amid the war. "We are stuck on the middle of the field, because on one side is Hungary, and the other side is Ukraine."

Hungary and Ukraine were not always rivals. In the final days of the Soviet Union, they were partners in nationalist struggles for more self-determination. Hungary was among the first countries to recognize Ukraine, in exchange for ethnic Hungarians within Ukraine's borders having the right to preserve their language and culture.

But in recent years, tensions have risen as Mr. Orban has increasingly sought to bring ethnic Hungarian enclaves in Ukraine and elsewhere under his sway. Among other things, he has encouraged Hungarians beyond the country's borders to claim citizenship, which allowed him to win over new voters to keep him in power.

In this poor region of Ukraine, along the Hungarian border, he doled out funding to run schools, churches, businesses and newspapers, winning gratitude — and helping fan resentments. The ceremony for a lost homeland did not exist before Mr. Orban came to power.

The feelings of otherness intensified as Ukraine, under constant threat by Russia, passed a law that mandates more classes be taught in Ukrainian in public schools. The law was mainly meant to rein in the use of the Russian language, but for the conservative Hungarian community where many still learn, and pray, almost exclusively in Hungarian, the law was seen as an unfair infringement on constitutional rights.

Among the villages dotting the rolling green plains beneath the Carpathian Mountains, life has long been a mix of Hungarian and Ukrainian influences. Not even the time of day is certain. For locals, there are always two choices for setting a meeting: Kyiv time or Budapest time.

During the war, the kinship with Hungary has contributed to differences over who is at fault. Despite his country's membership in the European Union, which has firmly sided with Ukraine, Mr. Orban — President Vladimir V. Putin's closest ally in the bloc — has equivocated, condemning the invasion but trying to avoid antagonizing Mr. Putin. He tried to block European Union sanctions on Russian energy

imports, on which Hungary relies. And he declined to give weapons to Ukraine, or even allow them to be shipped across Hungary's borders.

That wariness has seeped into the ethnic Hungarian community, fed by Hungarian television channels close to Mr. Orban's governing party that broadcast into Hungarian-Ukrainian homes along the border. Hungarian broadcasters cast doubt on Ukraine's position that Russia invaded to steal Ukrainian land, instead sharing Moscow's perspective that it invaded to protect Russian speakers — a minority with a different language, not unlike the ethnic Hungarians.

"I think this is the main reason for the war, not what Ukraine says," said Gyula Fodor, a vice rector at the Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute, chatting over traditional plum schnapps after the ceremony for the lost homeland. The institute, a private college, has received Hungarian funding, and Mr. Orban attended its ribbon-cutting.

As the war has dragged on, relations between Mr. Orban and President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine have grown increasingly frosty.

In the border towns, suspicion is in the air. Some ethnic Ukrainians claimed during interviews that in the first days of Russia's invasion Hungarian priests had urged the faithful to hold out hope that their region would be annexed to Hungary after Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, fell, though there is no documentary evidence to substantiate those assertions.

In towns with ethnic Hungarian majorities, some people reported being harassed with mysterious text messages in Ukrainian: "Ukraine for Ukrainians. Glory to the nation! Death to enemies!" They said the messages ended with a threat using another word for ethnic Hungarians: "Magyars to the knives."

Ukrainian intelligence officials publicly claim the texts came from a bot farm in Odesa using Russian software, and labeled it a Russian attempt to destabilize Ukraine, but they did not provide evidence.

Tensions in Transcarpathia erupted publicly after Moscow's annexation of Crimea in 2014. Right-wing nationalists marched through the streets of Uzhhorod in recent years, sometimes chanting "Magyars to the knife."

And a Hungarian cultural center in the city of Uzhhorod was set ablaze twice in 2017. In both cases, authorities said the perpetrators had pro-Russian links. Dmytro Tuzhanskyi, the director of the Institute for Central European Strategy in Uzhhorod that promotes Ukraine's alignment with the West, says he believes Moscow was behind other local provocations. Moscow would like to sow discord between Hungary and Ukraine, he alleged, as a way of causing more trouble for the Western alliance that has lined up against Mr. Putin.

Hungarian and local officials, he worried, could unwittingly fall prey to such designs: "They might think: One more little provocation — it means nothing. That's a very dangerous mind-set."

Yet for many ethnic Hungarians, Ukraine is not blameless.

László Zubánics, the leader of the Hungarian Democratic Union of Ukraine, said locals watch Hungarian television partly because no Ukrainian cable channels reach the border areas, something he saw as a form of political neglect. But he acknowledged that ethnic Hungarians often choose to tune into Hungarian, and not Ukrainian, satellite channels.

Many ethnic Hungarians say they are only able to afford to stay in the region of family vineyards and farms because of Hungarian funding. That makes many ethnic Hungarians skeptical of Ukraine's claims that it wants to help integrate them into society, Mr. Zubánics said: "Most kids and parents say, 'Why do I need the state language? I don't see my place here in this country.'"

	<p>Although the Soviets repressed and exiled Hungarian nationalists, some ethnic Hungarians have started to look back on Soviet rule as a time of relative cultural freedom as well. It was a time, according to Mr. Zubánics, when Hungarians recall holding prominent official positions, unlike in modern Ukraine.</p> <p>Nostalgia for Soviet times stirs the ire of local right-wing nationalists such as Vasyl Vovkunovich, once a political ally of Hungarian nationalists in the final days of the Soviet Union. In 2017, he said he led a march of supporters down the streets of Berehove, ripping down Hungarian flags raised over many churches and buildings.</p> <p>“These Hungarians are not worthy,” he said. “Their ancestors would roll over in their graves if they knew Hungary was siding with Russia.”</p> <p>For local residents like Zoltan Kazmér, 32, the present feels more complicated. He feels loyal to Ukraine, he said. But it was Hungarian funding that allowed him to turn his family’s century-old winemaking tradition into a business.</p> <p>“When we go to Hungary, we feel like Ukrainians,” he said. “When we are in Ukraine, we feel like Hungarians.”</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 US pledges \$1B equipment, arms to Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/15/briefing/ukraine-aid-biden-asia.html
GIST	<p>President Biden said the U.S. would send another \$1 billion in equipment and arms to Ukraine. Several other NATO allies also pledged more military help, including ammunition, long-range artillery rocket systems and helicopters.</p> <p>“The bravery, resilience and determination of the Ukrainian people continues to inspire the world,” Biden said in a statement. “And the United States, together with our allies and partners, will not waver in our commitment to the Ukrainian people as they fight for their freedom.”</p> <p>The announcement came after increasingly urgent pleas for more heavy arms from President Volodymyr Zelensky and other Ukrainian leaders, who have emphasized that they need far-reaching weapons to counter some of Russia’s advantages in battle in the eastern Donbas region.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Italy drops mask mandate for most venues
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/06/15/world/covid-19-mandates-vaccine-cases?name=style-coronavirus&region=hub&block=storyline_live_updates_block_recirc&action=click&pgtype=LegacyCollection#italy-drops-mask-mandates-for-sports-and-entertainment-venues
GIST	<p>Italy dropped its requirements for mask-wearing in theaters, sports centers and entertainment venues on Wednesday. Masks are now compulsory in the country only when using public transportation or in hospitals and homes for older people.</p> <p>The decision by the government of Prime Minister Mario Draghi was seen as a significant step in getting Italian society back to something like the way it was before the coronavirus pandemic struck the country hard in early 2020.</p> <p>“The goal is to live with the virus, and this means returning to social life,” Italy’s deputy health minister, Andrea Costa, told an Italian radio station on Monday. “What we need to watch very carefully are the data related to pressure on hospitals, which today are under control.”</p> <p>Coronavirus patients currently occupy only 2 percent of the beds in Italy’s intensive care units, and fewer than 7 percent of regular hospital beds. But after declining slowly and steadily for months, reports of new</p>

	<p>cases in Italy rose this week. Health authorities and scientists are trying to understand how two new Omicron subvariants, BA.4 and BA.5, figure in the increase.</p> <p>Italy also dropped a longstanding requirement on Wednesday that many workers over the age of 50 show proof of vaccination in order to report for work in person. All health care workers and all staff members at nursing homes must still show proof of immunization.</p> <p>Passengers traveling on Italian buses, trains and ships will have to wear high-quality face masks at least through the end of September. On airplanes, masks will be recommended but not mandatory, Italian health authorities said.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Saudis lift most Covid rules ahead of hajj
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/06/15/world/covid-19-mandates-vaccine-cases?name=stylncoronavirus&region=hub&block=storyline live updates block recirc&action=click&pgtype=LegacyCollection#saudi-arabia-covid-hajj-pilgrims
GIST	<p>Even as coronavirus cases rise steadily in Saudi Arabia, the kingdom has announced the lifting of most of its Covid precautions as it prepares to receive roughly a million pilgrims for the annual hajj season, the most since the start of the pandemic.</p> <p>Mask-wearing is no longer required in most enclosed spaces, although they will continue to be mandatory inside the holy sites in Mecca and Medina, the Interior Ministry said on Monday evening. The government also lifted a requirement to show proof of vaccination to enter most enclosed spaces, including airplanes.</p> <p>But travelers applying to enter the country to observe the hajj will still be required to show proof that they are fully vaccinated against Covid-19, the ministry said.</p> <p>In relaxing its restrictions, the Interior Ministry cited the country's high vaccination rate. Before the pandemic, millions of Muslim worshipers typically visited the holy sites in Saudi Arabia each year to observe hajj and Umrah, generating billions of dollars in revenue. The pandemic prompted the kingdom, which imposed strict Covid measures, in effect to cancel hajj in 2020. Last year it allowed only 60,000 pilgrims living in Saudi Arabia to observe the rituals.</p> <p>Officials expect 850,000 worshipers from overseas and 150,000 residents to begin arriving next month. In April, the number of daily coronavirus cases in Saudi Arabia had fallen to less than 100, but the figure has since risen steadily to more than 1,000 cases a day.</p> <p>On Monday Fahd al-Jalajel, the Saudi health minister, said that the lifting of Covid precautions offered "historical lessons for the whole world" and were an indication of the health care system's ability to manage global emergencies.</p> <p>Across the Middle East, daily coronavirus cases have been rising in recent weeks. The United Arab Emirates, which shares a border with Saudi Arabia, has tightened restrictions after seeing daily cases more than double over the past week. Indoor masks will now be more strictly enforced there, with violators fined more than \$800. And a "green pass," which is required to enter government buildings, will be valid for only 14 days, down from 30, which may require people to test more frequently.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Fed hike impact on consumers
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/how-will-the-feds-biggest-interest-rate-hike-since-1994-affect-you/
GIST	Los Angeles Times - Consumers are already paying more for gas, groceries and everyday items, but they should expect to fork over more in other parts of their lives after Wednesday's interest rate increase.

The Federal Reserve's move to rein in inflation will affect home mortgage loans, credit card borrowing, car loans, labor market stability and overall consumption. The goal is to reduce the amount of money in the economy.

"Too much money makes the money less valuable," said Larry Harris, professor of finance at the University of Southern California's Marshall School of Business and former chief economist at the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. "To control inflation, the Fed has to stop creating so much money. And when it stops creating money, interest rates tend to rise."

Though the Fed doesn't set the interest rates consumers pay on their credit cards, mortgages or personal loans, it controls the federal funds rate, which is the basic rate at which banks borrow and lend from each other. When that moves, so do consumer interest rates.

Banks are required to have a certain amount of money in reserve, and when they make loans to people who want to buy homes, cars or start businesses, they might have to borrow from other banks to make sure they maintain that reserve number.

At this time last year, the interest rate for borrowing from the general banking system was 0%. At that rate, said Leo Feler, a senior economist at the UCLA Anderson Forecast, banks were more than willing to make loans to consumers because there were basically no costs involved in covering their reserves. But now, with a higher interest rate range of 1.5% to 1.75%, banks will want to ensure they have enough in reserve and act more cautiously, making fewer home, auto or other loans as a result, he said.

The financial markets were already pricing in the expectation of higher interest rates — for example, mortgage rates hit 6%. The question is: How high will they go?

"The Fed has telegraphed that it's going to keep increasing rates until inflation comes down, no matter what it takes," Feler said.

Here's what consumers can expect to see after Wednesday's rate hike.

Mortgage rates

The Fed's benchmark interest rate hike will affect the minority of households who take out adjustable-rate mortgages or home equity lines of credit, likely increasing their cost to borrow.

Affected homeowners who have the option of converting to fixed-rate loans may want to consider doing so, said Harris of USC.

The impact on fixed rate mortgages — including the popular 30-year fixed loan — is less certain.

Mortgage experts said increases in the federal funds rate don't directly affect these mortgages, but they can indirectly push fixed mortgage rates higher or lower if Fed actions influence investor thinking about how entrenched inflation is.

That's because if inflation is expected to be high in the future, investors will demand a higher yield, or interest rate, on mortgages before they buy them.

Already, mortgage rates have surged this year, rising from the 3% range in January to above 5% as of last week and by some measures they have now topped 6%.

The sharp rise in borrowing costs has placed some homebuyers into new price brackets and priced others out all together, causing home sales to fall.

It's possible that a larger-than-expected increase in the federal funds rate could convince investors that inflation will be tamed sooner and thus send fixed-rate mortgages down, said mortgage industry consultant David Stevens, who is also the former head of the Mortgage Bankers Association.

Alternatively, larger increases in the Fed rate could spook investors and send mortgage rates higher, said Keith Gumbinger, vice president of research firm HSH.com.

Credit card debt

Credit card interest rates aren't set by the Fed, but they do move with the federal funds rate. When this rate rises, credit card interest rates will rise, too.

"With rising interest rates, people who have borrowed money at variable rates, like people who borrowed on their credit cards, should make an extra effort to reduce their balances as quick as they can," said Harris of USC. "Otherwise, they'll pay higher rates in the future, which will hurt them."

Labor market mobility

The Fed's higher-than-expected rate hike means hiring will likely slow down and there may be more layoffs on the horizon, said Feler of UCLA. He forecasts that the national unemployment rate will go up to 4.5% by the end of the year, up from 3.6% right now.

A tighter job market means workers will be worried about keeping their jobs and could be less likely to ask for higher wages. It also means people in low-wage jobs or jobs they don't like will probably stay in their positions for fear of being unemployed.

"This trickles throughout the labor force," Feler said. "As unemployment goes up, wage growth tends to slow down."

Less demand for goods

When interest rates rise, it's a lot harder for consumers to go out and buy things. That means less demand for goods.

Consumers stop buying goods because they're worried about losing their jobs. Discretionary expenses like going out to dinner or streaming services are cut. Sales of furniture and appliances slow because would-be homebuyers are priced out of the market. Big-ticket purchases are nixed.

That means fewer trucks transporting goods between the ports and warehouses, said Feler of UCLA.

"The way that you tame inflation expectations is that you generate an economic slowdown so people are worried about having jobs a year from now," he said.

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HEADLINE	06/16 Asia shares mixed after US raises key rate
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/asia-shares-mixed-after-fed-assurance-on-rates-lifts-wall-st/
GIST	<p>TOKYO (AP) — Asian shares were mixed Thursday after the Federal Reserve raised its key interest rate by three-quarters of a point and signaled more rate hikes were coming to fight inflation.</p> <p>Wall Street rallied Wednesday after the Fed's hike, the biggest since 1994, as investors took heart from Chair Jerome Powell's comments suggesting future rate increases may be more modest. The bigger than usual rate hike also had been anticipated for weeks and came as no surprise.</p> <p>The Bank of Japan is holding a two-day policy meeting, starting Thursday. The Japanese central bank is under pressure to act given downward pressures on the yen from U.S. rate hikes and super-low rates in Japan.</p> <p>Investors have been selling yen and buying dollars in anticipation of higher yields from dollar-denominated holdings. Japanese politicians and the central bank chief have expressed worries about the declining yen, but no dramatic policy changes are expected.</p>

By Thursday afternoon, the U.S. dollar edged up to 134.19 Japanese yen from 133.82 yen. It recently topped 135 yen, the highest level in 20 years. The euro cost \$1.0431, down from \$1.0447.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 added 0.5% in afternoon trading to 26,453.91. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 lost earlier gains, falling nearly 0.2% to 6,591.10. South Korea's Kospi inched up almost 0.1% to 2,448.65. Hong Kong's Hang Seng shed 1.3% to 21,029.07, while the Shanghai Composite fell 0.6% to 3,286.60.

The Finance Ministry reported Japan recorded a nearly 2.4 trillion yen (\$17.9 billion) trade deficit last month, its 10th straight month of a red ink. Japan racked up its highest imports for the month of May since 1979, as surging energy prices and a weak yen sent the value of imports soaring. Resource-poor Japan imports almost all its energy.

On Wall Street, the S&P 500 climbed 1.5% to 3,789.99 after whipping through roller-coaster trading immediately following the Fed's latest move.

In the bond market, Treasury yields eased after Powell hinted at smaller rate increases later this year. Earlier this week, yields had shot to their highest levels in more than a decade on expectations for a more aggressive Fed.

The Fed is "not trying to induce a recession now, let's be clear about that," Powell said. He called Wednesday's big increase "front-end loading."

The two-year Treasury yield fell to 3.21% from 3.45% late Tuesday, with the biggest move happening after Powell said 0.75 percentage point rate hikes wouldn't be common. The yield on the 10-year Treasury pulled back to 3.34% from 3.48%.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average swung between gains and losses before finishing 1% higher, at 30,668.53. The Nasdaq composite jumped 2.5%, to 11,099.15.

The S&P 500 tumbled into a bear market earlier this week and Wednesday's gain was its first in six days.

Some analysts cautioned the rally could be short-lived given how deeply and broadly high inflation has seeped into the economy.

All kinds of investments, from bonds to bitcoin, have tumbled this year as high inflation forces central banks to swiftly remove supports propped underneath markets early in the pandemic.

Even without recession, higher interest rates hurt prices for investments. The hardest-hit have been those that soared the most in the easy-money era of ultralow interest rates, including high-growth technology stocks and cryptocurrencies.

The economy is still largely holding up amid a red-hot job market, but it has shown some signs of distress recently. Sales at U.S. retailers unexpectedly slumped in May from April.

Cryptocurrency prices continued to sink, and bitcoin dropped as low as \$20,087.90, nearly 71% below its record of \$68,990.90 set late last year. It was down nearly 1% at \$21,770 in afternoon trading, according to CoinDesk.

Powell said Wednesday the Fed is moving "expeditiously" to get rates closer to normal levels after last week's stunning report that showed inflation at the consumer level unexpectedly accelerated last month. That dashed hopes on Wall Street that inflation may have already peaked.

The war in Ukraine has helped send prices for oil soaring because the region is a major producer of energy. COVID infections in China, meanwhile, have led to the closure of factories and disrupted supply

chains. It all helped pull the S&P 500 down more than 20% from its record set in early January, putting Wall Street into what investors call a bear market.

Many of those concerns are still around, which will likely keep markets volatile.

In energy trading, benchmark U.S. crude jumped 56 cents to \$115.87 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It shed \$3.62 on Wednesday to \$115.31 a barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, added 43 cents to \$118.94 a barrel.

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HEADLINE	06/15 Airfares sky-high summer travel season
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/boeing-aerospace/as-summer-travel-season-arrives-in-seattle-airline-fares-are-sky-high/
GIST	<p>After being mostly grounded for two years, Americans rushed to book summer flights this year — and are paying very heavy prices for their tickets.</p> <p>Airlines plead an imbalance between supply and demand. A shortage of pilots. Soaring jet fuel prices. Those factors are real.</p> <p>Yet airline analysts now see something more deliberate at play.</p> <p>As people have begun to balk at the sky-high prices, and some switch plans away from flying, demand has softened. The airline response is not to lower the fares, but to keep them high by further cutting the supply of seats.</p> <p>“They’re starting to see some resistance from flyers to paying those fares,” said George Ferguson, senior aerospace and airline analyst at Bloomberg intelligence. “At that point, you either lower fares and fill airplanes, or keep fares high and start to cut capacity. So we’ve seen them cutting capacity.”</p> <p>In short, airlines are continuing to reduce their schedules in July and August not necessarily because they don’t have enough pilots but in part to keep ticket prices high and maximize profits.</p> <p>“They know how many pilots they have to fulfill that schedule. And they’re still cutting,” Ferguson added. “The pilot shortage is a bit of a convenient excuse here. I think they can’t fill airplanes at the fare levels that they’re offering. And so instead of cutting those fares and lowering their profitability, they are cutting the schedule.”</p> <p>A recent economy-class ticket from Seattle to New York cost just over \$1,000. A nonstop trip from Seattle to Cincinnati runs \$1,300. And Seattle-Los Angeles will cost \$400-\$500.</p> <p>For many, the high prices dramatically bump up the cost of a vacation. For those who must travel on short notice, perhaps for family reasons, it may not be a matter of choice.</p> <p>In a country as big as the U.S., with few practical alternatives for longer journeys, the airline network is a vital piece of the nation’s transportation infrastructure — now being priced out of the reach of many people.</p> <p>Airline industry analyst and consultant Bob Mann said that if not for all the pent-up travel demand, “there’s no way anybody would be buying travel at these prices.”</p> <p>“There’s a view that because there’s a surge in demand, the airlines think they can charge whatever they want,” he said.</p> <p>“Mind-boggling” fare inflation</p>

The air travel system in the U.S. is patently under strain, beset by delays and flight cancellations that cause huge inconvenience and often great additional expense to travelers.

In April and May, Alaska Airlines didn't have enough pilots to fly its schedule, [resulting in hundreds of canceled flights](#). As it struggled to cope, the Seattle-based carrier cut its schedule by 10% through this month.

Over the Memorial Day weekend, Delta suffered a bigger meltdown, canceling more than 700 flights or 7% of its schedule. It cut 100 daily flights through early August.

Hundreds of thousands of passengers have had their travel plans massively disrupted this year. Yet even as the quality and reliability of the U.S. air travel system has dropped disastrously with no relief in sight, ticket prices have soared.

According to data compiled by Bob Harrell, who tracks airfares for travel industry analysts through his consultancy Harrell Associates, average leisure fares last week were 41% higher than for the same week a year ago.

Compared to pre-pandemic times, the price surge is even greater. Harrell's data from a five-week period in March 2022 shows average leisure fares were 52% higher than in the same period in pre-COVID 2019.

"That's mind-boggling," said Henry Harteveltdt, a travel industry analyst with Atmosphere Research. "I'm very concerned that we're reaching a tipping point and consumers are simply going to say enough is enough. They're just going to cut back on trips."

Airline revenue surges after long drought

The pandemic explains part of the price squeeze.

In the historic air travel downturn of the past two years, airlines had to cut their schedules and their workforces drastically. Now, with shortages of labor — including pilots, flight attendants, baggage handlers and call center agents — airlines haven't yet fully brought back their people or their flights.

So fewer airplane seats are available now than in pre-pandemic times. Delta's seat capacity in July is 85% of what it was in July 2019.

"You're squeezing a lot more people into a lot smaller amount of capacity," said Harteveltdt.

Soaring jet fuel prices since the Russian invasion of Ukraine are another factor. The price of jet fuel is twice what it was a year ago.

Alaska Airlines in a filing this month projected that, despite a fuel hedging strategy to blunt the edge of higher costs, it will pay 60% more for jet fuel this quarter than it did in the same period in 2019.

And after two years of deep red ink and accumulated debt, CEOs at U.S. carriers are seizing the opportunity to claw back some of their massive losses.

At an investor conference this month hosted by Sanford Bernstein, Delta CEO Ed Bastian said "demand is off the charts."

"It's coming with leisure, it's coming with premium consumer. It's coming with businesses, coming with international," he said. "We expect pricing this summer to be up probably somewhere between 25% and 30% on average. We've never seen anything of that scale."

At the same conference American Airlines CEO Robert Isom said the carrier is maximizing its revenue intake by not selling out all its seats months in advance, but holding many of them open for passengers buying tickets closer to the date of flight at higher prices.

“We’re doing a great job of making sure that there’s plenty of capacity still to be bought quite likely at higher prices,” Isom said. “We’re able to reserve enough (seats) to ensure that we’re able to take advantage of closer demand.”

A tough summer to travel

Ironically, the service passengers are paying more for has never been worse.

Mann notes how service has deteriorated over many years to the point where now the airline industry is virtually self-service.

“You do your own bookings, your own boarding passes. You do your own fee purchases. You do your own check-in and you get your own stuff on the plane,” he said. “Sometimes you’re even charged for doing all those things, in addition to doing them yourself.”

At the best of times, at least the journey can run smoothly. But this summer, prepare for a rougher trip.

Mann predicts that when crews reach their federally mandated flying limits each month, perhaps exacerbated by disruption due to weather or by COVID outbreaks, airlines won’t have enough reserve pilots to cover additional flying, as happened at Alaska.

“I can pretty much predict at the end of each calendar month, the last four or five days is going to be operationally very difficult,” he said.

He added that even though carriers have voluntarily cut their schedules, airline insiders he has talked to are fearful of what lies ahead this summer.

“They have no confidence in the ability to run a schedule reliable enough that the system simply won’t melt down,” said Mann.

Harteveldt agrees that it will be “a really tough summer for people to travel.” When cancellations occur, it will be hard to find open seats on other flights to rebook stranded passengers.

“All the airlines are full, or close to it,” he said. “If something goes wrong, there’s simply less wiggle room for the industry to recover.”

“The travel industry is doing an awful lot to piss off the traveling public this summer. And it’s not just the airlines,” Harteveldt added. “Hotels have cut back on service. Rental car companies are taking reservations and then telling people who are showing up, nope, we don’t have a car for you.”

After Labor Day

A reaction to the high prices has already set in.

Harteveldt said his contacts in airline reservation departments are “starting to see a slight slowdown in the booking velocity.”

Coast-to-coast fares of \$1,000 or \$1,500 “are a big turnoff to a lot of consumers, especially people traveling on their own dime,” he said.

Mann said the airlines have to be careful not to force a change in travel patterns that destroys the current demand.

“A lot of people will say, ‘Gas prices are high but if I get in the SUV and even if I pay the tolls and drive six or seven hours, it’s really not that bad,’ ” he said.

Airlines will realize this sooner or later, he said.

	<p>“They drink their own Kool-Aid for a while ... so they keep charging those prices until people say no,” said Mann. “Then they realize, ‘whoa, wait a minute, we may have overstepped our bounds here.’</p> <p>“Yeah, there’s a supply and demand imbalance, but not to this extent,” he said. “We can’t push people up 30, 40, 50% on prices and not get a demand destruction response.”</p> <p>One ray of hope: the airlines likely won’t be able to maintain the high prices when summer ends.</p> <p>“When the economy sneezes, the travel industry catches a cold,” said Harteveltdt.</p> <p>With consumers battered by inflation in almost every spending sector and worried by a shaky economy, once the already-booked vacations are complete, leisure travel is likely to fall off precipitously in the fall.</p> <p>And while business travel is beginning to come back, it’s still far off where it was before the pandemic.</p> <p>So Ferguson sees a tough second half of the year for airline profitability amid lower demand that will bring ticket prices down again.</p> <p>“The number of people willing to pay up is going to diminish significantly after Labor Day,” said Ferguson.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Guns, magazines sales surge ahead of ban
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/wa-gun-shops-report-increased-sales-ahead-of-state-ban-on-high-capacity-magazines/
GIST	<p>Washington gun shops are reporting record sales in the final weeks leading up to the state’s ban on firearm magazines with more than 10 rounds.</p> <p>The uptick in sales comes as recent mass shootings — including the massacre at an Uvalde, Texas, school that killed 21 people and the racist shooting in Buffalo, New York, that killed 10 — have renewed calls for new gun restrictions.</p> <p>Interest in buying guns and AR-15-style rifles also increased nationally in the days following the Texas shooting, according to Google Trends, a tool that shows the volume of popular searches.</p> <p>Advocates of increased regulations and Democrats have called Washington’s ban, which passed in March and goes into effect July 1, an important step for reducing gun violence and fatalities. Conservatives and gun-rights advocates have called the law ineffective and a violation of the Second Amendment.</p> <p>The law, approved by the Washington state Legislature and Gov. Jay Inslee, prohibits the manufacture, distribution and sale of firearm magazines with more than 10 rounds of ammunition.</p> <p>The law makes Washington the 10th state in the U.S. to restrict the sale of magazines with more than 10 or 15 rounds.</p> <p>While gun sales have surged generally since the start of the pandemic, the Washington law has prompted people to buy a flurry of guns and the soon-to-be-banned magazines, local gun shop owners say.</p> <p>The law limits not just magazines for rifles that hold 20 to 30 rounds but also the sale of magazines that go into certain handguns.</p> <p>Danny Borne, owner of Dan’s Firearms in Port Orchard, said there has been more interest in AR-15-style rifles, which he attributes to the upcoming magazine ban. Borne said responsible gun owners are being unfairly punished and he is skeptical that the magazine ban will prevent shootings.</p>

“The criminals aren’t going to care. They’re still going to do what they’re still going to do and the only people that it’s going to affect are people that weren’t a problem to start with,” he said.

Borne said the pandemic business boom has shown no sign of stopping. Sales doubled the year following March 2020 and then doubled again the next year, he said.

In-person and online sales of magazines have skyrocketed in recent months at Precise Shooter, a Woodinville gun shop, said owner Sergey Solyanik in an emailed statement.

“There are millions of magazines brought into WA in anticipation of ban, at the end of the day there will be more magazines here than a decade worth of normal sales,” he said.

Sales for high-end custom-made guns for competitive shooters that do not come with low-capacity magazine options have also increased, Solyanik said.

Owner of Wade’s Eastside Guns in Bellevue, Wade Gaughran said while first-time buyers made up a lot of the initial pandemic gun sales, he is seeing more longtime gun enthusiasts in his store trying to fill gaps in their collections before a ban takes place.

Gaughran said since the shooting in May in Uvalde, he has seen around a 25% increase in sales. However, he typically sees a delayed uptick in sales after national tragedies, he said.

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HEADLINE	06/14 Why catching Covid for first time now?
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/why-are-so-many-people-catching-covid-for-the-first-time-now-heres-what-we-know/
GIST	<p><i>The Kansas City Star</i> KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Have you recently contracted COVID-19 for the first time during the pandemic? Those who have avoided the virus for more than two years may be disappointed to catch it during the current, relatively mild wave. But there are a variety of factors contributing to this unofficial, anecdotal trend.</p> <p>Dr. Dana Hawkinson, an infectious disease specialist at The University of Kansas Health System, spoke with The Star about these so-called COVID “first-timers” and what we can all do to stay safe.</p> <p>“I’ve heard more and more anecdotes of people who survived two years without having been infected with SARS-CoV-2 and now they are getting infected,” he said in a news briefing.</p> <p>How many current COVID-19 patients have it for the first time?</p> <p>We don’t know. The popularity of home testing and a patchwork system of ways to report positive test results have made case numbers in general extremely difficult to track, while tracking “first-timers” is even harder.</p> <p>“I don’t believe there’s any prospective data on who gets it who has not had it before,” said Hawkinson. “That would be very difficult to [determine], number one, because we don’t even have an accurate count of the total cases.”</p> <p>That’s because more people are testing at home, and mass testing events and lab-based COVID testing have declined significantly since the original omicron variant surge, leaving state and CDC officials in the dark about how many positive cases are really out there.</p> <p>Hawkinson added that while retrospective data about “first-timers” may be available in the future, it would likely take a year or more to gather and report.</p>

“Even that is going to be difficult because you’re going to have [to] identify and know for certain that that person did not have [COVID] before,” he said.

If you develop symptoms of COVID-19, testing for it as soon as possible is very important, he added. A positive test result will get you access to new antiviral treatments like the highly effective Paxlovid pill, reducing your risk of getting severely ill.

Why are some people catching COVID-19 now after avoiding it for over two years?

Since most knowledge about recent first-time cases is anecdotal, it’s difficult to tell how widespread this phenomenon is and what causes it. Dr. Hawkinson said that there is likely a combination of factors to blame. Here are a few he listed:

- Many people are relaxing their mask-wearing and social distancing habits.
- Vaccinated or previously infected people may have the virus but be asymptomatic, causing them to spread it to others without knowing.
- Recent subvariants of the omicron strain, including BA.2.12.1, BA.4 and BA.5, may be better at evading the immune system’s antibodies than previous variants.
- The arrival of summer has led to more travel and social gatherings where the virus can be spread.

If I got vaccinated, why did I still catch COVID? Does this mean vaccines don’t work?

No. The existing COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective against the worst effects of the virus, and are working just as they were intended to.

“The vaccines were never meant to prevent infection,” Hawkinson told The Star. “It does have some mild protection against infection, especially in that short time, say four to six weeks after your vaccine dose. But ... for six months or more we see that you have continued good immunity and good protection against hospitalization, severe disease and death.”

Hawkinson added that new formulations of the vaccine are already in development and are going through trials. These new vaccines may include increased protection against omicron and its subvariants. News about these new vaccines could be released as soon as the next month or two.

What can I do to prevent catching COVID-19 for the first time?

The guidance on avoiding COVID-19 hasn’t changed: Hawkinson advised practicing social distancing, wearing a mask indoors and avoiding large gatherings. It’s also important to get vaccinated with an mRNA vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna) if you haven’t already.

Booster shots are also extremely important to reinforce your body’s defenses against the virus. You can get a booster shot as soon as four months after you complete your initial round of vaccination, and some people are also eligible for a second booster after that.

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HEADLINE	06/16 NKorea reports another disease outbreak
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/n-korea-reports-another-disease-outbreak-amid-covid-19-wave/
GIST	<p>SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea on Thursday reported the eruption of another infectious disease in addition to its ongoing COVID-19 outbreak, saying leader Kim Jong Un has donated his private medicines to those stricken with the new disease.</p> <p>It’s unclear how serious the new epidemic is, but some outside observers say North Korea likely aims to burnish Kim’s image as a leader caring about public livelihoods as he needs greater public support to overcome pandemic-related hardships.</p> <p>Kim on Wednesday offered his family’s reserve medicines for those diagnosed with “an acute enteric epidemic” in the southwestern Haeju city, the official Korean Central News Agency reported. The North’s main Rodong Sinmun newspaper separately carried a front-page photo showing Kim and his wife Ri Sol Ju reviewing saline solutions and other medicines that they were donating.</p>

KCNA didn't elaborate on exactly what the epidemic is and how many people have been infected.

Some observers say the "an enteric epidemic" in North Korea refers to an infectious disease like typhoid, dysentery or cholera, which are intestinal illnesses caused by germs via contaminated food and water or contact with feces of infected people.

Such diseases routinely occur in North Korea, which lacks good water treatment facilities and whose public healthcare infrastructure largely remains broken since the mid-1990s.

After North Korea last month reported a rising number of patients with feverish symptoms following its admission of the coronavirus outbreak, South Korea's spy agency said that "a considerable number" of those fever cases included those sick with diseases like measles, typhoid and pertussis.

"The outbreak of measles or typhoid isn't uncommon in North Korea. I think it's true there is an outbreak of an infectious disease there but North Korea is using it as an opportunity to emphasize that Kim is caring for his people," said Ahn Kyung-su, head of DPRKHEALTH.ORG, a website focusing on health issues in North Korea. "So it's more like a political message than medical one."

Last month, Kim already sent his family's medicines to COVID-19 patients, according to state media reports.

KCNA said more than 4.5 million out of the country's 26 million people have fallen ill due to an unidentified fever but only 73 died. The country has identified only a fraction of those as confirmed coronavirus cases due to an apparent lack of test kits in the country. Many foreign experts question the North's death toll, saying that's likely underreported to protect Kim from any political damage.

During a ruling party conference last week, Kim claimed the pandemic situation has passed the stage of "serious crisis." But the country still maintains elevated restrictions that some outside experts say will further strain the country's already troubled economy hit by long-running pandemic-related border shutdowns and U.N. sanctions.

Later Thursday, South Korea's Unification Ministry renewed its offer of inter-Korean cooperation on health and medical issues. After the North's admission of the COVID-19 outbreak, South Korea and the United States offered the humanitarian shipments of vaccines, medical supplies and other assistance, but the North hasn't responded.

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HEADLINE	06/15 Low testing levels hide Covid wave Texas?
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/low-levels-testing-hiding-covid-wave-texas-experts/story?id=85356606
GIST	<p>Looking at data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention would give the impression that COVID-19 is generally under control in Texas.</p> <p>The federal agency's map of levels of COVID-19 spread in the community shows most counties in the state are classified as "low" or "medium."</p> <p>But public health experts said this doesn't tell the true story and that case counts are artificially low in Texas due to low levels of testing reported to public health officials.</p> <p>"There are limitations to this metric by the CDC," Dr. Luis Ostrosky-Zeichner, an infectious disease specialist at UTHealth Houston and Memorial Hermann Texas Medical Center, told ABC News. "The primary driver for the first part of the metric is the number of cases and then you get into hospitalizations and percentage of occupancy by COVID-19 patients."</p>

He continued, "Until you see a high number of hospitalizations, you don't even get to the medium level. And we know that there has to be significant underreporting at this point for the number of cases."

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According to the CDC, as of June 7 -- the latest date for which data is available -- Texas is currently performing 20,535 new COVID-19 [tests per day](#) with a seven-day rolling average of 24,352.

This is half as many as the average of 55,842 tests being performed three months ago.

Doctors told ABC News that testing is very different at this point in the pandemic, with fewer people testing at government-run sites and more people testing at home.

"Many people have access to testing through other means rather than going through one of the government screening centers," Dr. Robert Atmar, a professor of medicine and infectious diseases at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, told ABC News. "People have access to home kits; they can buy them at the pharmacy."

This means some Americans are testing positive for COVID-19 on at-home rapid tests and not reporting their results to public health officials either because there is no mechanism to report results, or they just fail to do so.

Additionally, if people need treatments, such as antiviral pills like Paxlovid, they are getting prescriptions from their doctor rather than going to a hospital to receive them, doctors said.

"This is partly good news because people are not getting sick enough to require health care, but the downside is you cannot track the amount of disease in the community," Atmar said.

This means the CDC data on COVID-19 community levels is somewhat unreliable.

"The current national risk map may provide a false sense of relief," said Dr. John Brownstein, an epidemiologist at Boston Children's Hospital and an ABC News contributor. "Many areas with high rates of transmission are deemed to be low risk only because of data reporting gaps and lags."

He added, "The shift to home testing compounds these issues as that data is unlikely to make it into public health surveillance systems."

Experts said this is one reason why wastewater data, which shows virus levels in wastewater samples, may be a more accurate representation of levels of COVID-19 in a community.

Although wastewater data is not representative of the entire U.S. -- with many areas not even having treatment plants -- it does give an idea of hidden waves across the country.

According to data from a [Houston wastewater monitoring dashboard](#) -- run jointly by the Houston Health Department and Rice University -- levels of COVID-19 in wastewater samples in the city, as of June 6, are 502% compared to baseline in July 2020.

This is similar to levels seen during the delta surge, which peaked at 539% compared to levels in July 2020.

Dr. Wesley Long, medical director of microbiology at Houston Methodist Hospital, told ABC News that because transmission levels are high -- not low or medium as indicated by the CDC in most Texas counties -- it's important for more people to get tested.

"What I would like to see change is for people to still be mindful," he said. "Certainly, if they have symptoms, even if they're mild symptoms, to get tested so that they know they're negative or so that they can take the proper precautions and don't continue to spread the virus."

	<p>Dr. James Cutrell, an infectious disease physician at UT Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, told ABC News he recommends people not just look at the CDC transmission map but also data on trends to see if cases are rising or falling and assess their personal risk.</p> <p>"People who are fully vaccinated and boosted may be able to be more liberal in terms of what they feel comfortable whereas others who may have medical conditions or live with those who are more medically vulnerable need to consider being a bit more cautious," Cutrell said.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Congo warns Rwanda 'it will have war'
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/congo-official-rwanda-war-war-85410555
GIST	<p>GOMA, Congo -- If Rwanda wants war with neighboring Congo, "it will have war," a top Congolese military official said Wednesday to thousands in eastern Congo protesting the recent capture of a nearby town by rebels.</p> <p>Gen. Sylvain Ekenge, spokesman for the military governor of North Kivu province, made the inflammatory comments to protesters in the city of Goma before asking them to demonstrate peacefully.</p> <p>"Rwanda does not like us. We are not afraid of it and we will fight it," Ekenge said. "If it wants war, it will have war," he said, adding: "No one will occupy a single centimeter of our territory."</p> <p>The escalating tensions come after the M23 rebel movement seized Bunagana, a key town in eastern Congo, on Monday.</p> <p>Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta called Wednesday for the newly created East African Regional Force to be activated for eastern Congo, noting with concern the "open hostilities" there.</p> <p>Kenyatta, chairman of the East African Community, said this Sunday's meeting of regional commanders should be used to finalize preparations for immediate deployment to North and South Kivu and Ituri provinces.</p> <p>He called for a cessation of hostilities and for the three provinces to be declared a "weapons-free zone" where anyone outside mandated forces would be disarmed.</p> <p>An official with the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Congo, known as MONUSCO, said Wednesday it could not confirm whether Rwandan or Ugandan forces helped the M23 rebel movement seize Bunagana.</p> <p>"MONUSCO has not been able to verify by its own means these allegations," Lt. Frederic Harvey, the mission's chief of liaison with the Congolese army, said during a weekly news conference.</p> <p>Rwanda and Uganda have denied for years that they support the M23 rebel movement. Many of the M23 fighters are Congolese ethnic Tutsis and Rwanda's president is of Rwandan Tutsi descent. M23 has in turn accused Congolese officials of stoking xenophobia.</p> <p>Rwanda's government, meanwhile, has blamed Congolese forces for injuring several civilians in cross-border shelling. On Tuesday, a government statement said that the Rwandan military "will continue to seek guarantees that cross-border attacks on Rwanda's territory are stopped."</p> <p>The M23 rose to prominence about a decade ago when its fighters seized Goma, the largest city in Congo's east which sits along the border with Rwanda. The rebels were pushed out of Goma and, after a peace deal, many of M23's fighters were integrated into Congo's national military.</p> <p>But earlier this year the rebels made a comeback, launching an offensive against Congo's military after saying the government had failed to live up to its decade-long promises.</p>

	<p>On Wednesday, demonstrators in Goma called on the international community to intervene amid rising tensions.</p> <p>“We cannot accept being attacked by neighboring countries,” said Jack Sinzahera, who was among those protesting in Goma. “That’s why today there is a popular mobilization to say no to the aggression of Rwanda and Uganda in our country.”</p> <p>The demonstration was peaceful though police later fired tear gas on some protesters who tried to march to the border post separating Congo from Rwanda.</p> <p>Relations between Rwanda and Congo have been fraught for decades. Rwanda alleges that Congo gave refuge to the ethnic Hutus who carried out the 1994 Rwandan genocide that killed at least 800,000 ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus. The two countries have long accused each other of supporting various rival armed groups.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Monthly car payments hit record high
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Business/monthly-car-payments-hit-record-high-712/story?id=85413102
GIST	<p>Average monthly car payments hit a record high in May while the cost of new vehicles continues to rise, according to industry insiders.</p> <p>A report from Moody's Analytics found that typical monthly car payments hit a record high of \$712 in May. Kelley Blue Book data found that new vehicle prices averaged \$47,148 in May, the second highest on record.</p> <p>Vehicle affordability worsened again because of higher interest rates and increased car prices, according to a recent Cox Automotive & Moody's Analytics vehicle affordability index report. The report said "the estimated typical monthly payment increased 1.7% to \$712," which is a new record high for monthly payments.</p> <p>It would cost 41.3 weeks of median income to buy a new vehicle, which is a jump of 19% from May of 2021, according to the report.</p> <p>Brian Moody, executive editor for Kelley Blue Book, told ABC News that a low supply of cars and high demand from buyers means consumers "are going to be paying more" than the MSRP. Data from Kelley Blue Book suggests non-luxury car buyers paid on average \$1,030 more than the sticker price.</p> <p>For luxury cars, where experts say there is a lot of demand, buyers are paying an average of \$65,379 for a new vehicle, about \$1,071 above sticker price, according to Kelley Blue Book data.</p> <p>But Moody said customers can still get good deals on less sought-after brands like Mazda, Hyundai and Buick.</p> <p>And prices could even drop later this year, he noted.</p> <p>"Although prices are up for May, it's only 1%, and so that indicates ... we may be headed toward a place where the prices will start to decrease," Moody said.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Stocks rally after Fed rate increase
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/global-stocks-markets-dow-update-06-15-2022-11655278404
GIST	U.S. stocks soared Wednesday after the Federal Reserve approved its biggest interest-rate increase since 1994 but suggested moves of that scale likely wouldn't become common.

The S&P 500 rose 54.51 points, or 1.5%, to 3789.99, snapping a five-day losing streak. The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 303.70 points, or 1%, to 30668.53, and the Nasdaq Composite rose 270.81 points, or 2.5%, to 11099.15.

The Fed's move is its latest effort [to quell inflation](#) through tighter monetary policy. Investors had largely expected the Fed to raise its short-term benchmark rate by [0.75 percentage point](#). What some had worried about heading into Wednesday's interest-rate decision was that the Fed would have to raise interest rates at an even more aggressive pace.

At a press conference that followed the decision, Fed Chairman Jerome Powell said Wednesday's move was "an unusually large one." He added that he expected either a 0.50 percentage point or 0.75 percentage point increase at the Fed's July meeting.

Ultimately, the guidance the Fed gives about the direction of interest rates Wednesday is more important for markets than the size of the rate increase, said Dorian Carrell, a fund manager at Schroders. Uncertainty about monetary policy has been a key driver of volatility this year, helping send the S&P 500 on Monday into bear-market territory, or a drop of at least 20% from a previous high.

"Markets are pricing in a Fed that's trying to get in front of the curve rather than behind the curve on inflation," said Art Hogan, chief market strategist at National Securities. That helped lift stocks heading into Wednesday's rate decision, Mr. Hogan added.

Stocks rose broadly, with 10 of the S&P 500's 11 sectors ending higher.

Technology stocks, which have been among the hardest-hit areas of the market this year, were among the biggest gainers. Microsoft, Nvidia, Amazon.com and Netflix each added about 3% or more.

Economically sensitive areas of the market also rose. Bank stocks, which had sold off on investor fears about a slowdown in growth, climbed Wednesday, with the KBW Nasdaq Bank Index up 1.6%.

Energy stocks slid, marking a relatively rare retreat for the year's best-performing S&P 500 sector. The S&P 500 energy sector fell about 2.1%.

Meanwhile, U.S. government bonds rallied after sliding in recent weeks in a selloff that has pushed yields to their highest levels in more than a decade. The yield on 10-year Treasuries slipped to 3.389% from 3.482% Tuesday. Yields, which fall as bond prices rise, help set rates for everything from mortgages to federal student loans to auto loans.

Elsewhere, European stocks and prices on peripheral government bonds in the eurozone jumped after the ECB held an ad hoc meeting Wednesday to discuss turbulence in the region's bond markets.

The ECB outlined a plan to buy more bonds of weaker eurozone governments under an existing bond-purchase program. It tasked ECB staff with accelerating the design of a new instrument that would narrow differences in borrowing costs across the region, addressing financial imbalances that have long posed a problem to the currency union.

"They wanted to make sure financing conditions don't deteriorate too much," said Willem Sels, chief investment officer at HSBC Private Banking and Wealth Management. He said the meeting signaled that the ECB was ready to cushion markets earlier than investors had expected.

The Stoxx Europe 600 rose 1.4%, led by shares of banks and insurers. Shares of Italian banks, which own a substantial chunk of government bonds, had suffered as the debt fell in price. Intesa Sanpaolo and UniCredit were among the best performers in the European market Wednesday.

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SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/us-economy-retail-sales-may-2022-11655238895?mod=hp_lead_pos1
GIST	<p>Americans' retail spending declined in May, as consumers felt the pinch from inflation, higher gasoline prices and rising interest rates.</p> <p>Retail sales—a measure of spending at stores, online and in restaurants—fell a seasonally adjusted 0.3% in May from the previous month, the Commerce Department said Wednesday. That was the first decline in month-over-month retail spending this year.</p> <p>The pullback in spending is another indicator showing the economy is losing momentum as the Federal Reserve takes action to raise interest rates and combat historically high inflation.</p> <p>Consumer spending, buoyed by strong job growth and stimulus measures, was the backbone of the country's economic recovery since a brief recession occurred in early 2020. That strength is fading in the face of the strongest pace of inflation in four decades. "Now consumers are planning to take a back seat," said Beth Ann Bovino, U.S. chief economist at S&P Global Ratings. "How far they're planning to sit back—it's still an open question."</p> <p>A sharp drop in vehicle sales—due to high prices, low inventory and rising interest rates on car loans—played an outsized role in the decline in month-over-month retail spending. Consumers also pulled back their spending on goods such as furniture, electronics and online purchases.</p> <p>Higher borrowing costs are hitting the housing market as well, with the National Association of Home Builders reporting Wednesday that confidence among home builders in the U.S. decreased in June for the sixth consecutive month.</p> <p>More broadly, monthly job gains slowed in May, as did annual wage increases. Consumer spending eased in April and the saving rate fell to the lowest in 14 years, suggesting many Americans are tapping savings to offset cost increases from inflation.</p> <p>The weaker-than-expected retail sales in May and a downward revision to April spending prompted some economists to downgrade their expectations for economic growth in the second quarter. The economy contracted in the first quarter.</p> <p>JPMorgan Chase & Co. analysts lowered their forecast for U.S. gross domestic product growth to an annual rate of 2.5% in the second quarter from 3.25% previously. Data firm IHS Markit cut its growth estimate to 0.9%.</p> <p>Excluding autos and gasoline, retail sales rose just 0.1% in May, well behind the pace at which prices increased last month. Unlike other reports compiled by the government, retail sales aren't adjusted for inflation. Soaring gasoline and grocery prices meant households shelled out more on them in May—Americans are spending over 43% more on gasoline than a year ago and nearly 9% more on groceries.</p> <p>Retail sales were up 8.1% last month from a year earlier, a robust gain but below the blistering pace of inflation, which was up to 8.6% in May from a year earlier, according to the Labor Department's consumer-price index.</p> <p>The Fed's decision Wednesday to raise its benchmark federal-funds rate to a range between 1.5% and 1.75% will make car loans and credit-card debt more expensive in the months ahead. Still, Fed Chairman Jerome Powell said he thinks consumers are in good shape, and the economy is well positioned to deal with higher interest rates.</p> <p>"Overall spending is very strong," Mr. Powell told reporters, adding the central bank isn't seeing a broad slowdown. "We see the economy slowing a bit but still at healthy growth levels," he said.</p> <p>Consumers are getting less for their money due to rapidly rising prices. The dynamic is also driving a shift from discretionary purchases such as furniture and electronics to essentials like food and gasoline.</p>

The average cost of a gallon of regular gasoline exceeded \$4.60 a gallon in late May, up from about \$3 a gallon a year earlier, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. Prices in June have [risen above \\$5 a gallon](#).

Logan CoBell, 33 years old, who works in Chicago as a bartender and substitute teacher, said he is driving only for essential reasons, such as commuting to work, to save money on gasoline. He is watching his spending at the grocery store by cutting down on purchases of red meat and opting for cheaper alternatives such as pork and nonorganic chicken.

Mr. CoBell said he was holding off on upgrading to a new computer “so I have cash in hand just in case something weird happens, like another shutdown.”

Companies [are struggling with higher inflation](#), which they say is increasingly hard [to pass on to consumers](#). Some large retailers such as [Walmart](#) Inc. and [Target](#) Corp. in recent weeks [reported steep profit declines](#) as rising supply-chain, wage and inflation-related costs ate into earnings.

Inflation and high fuel prices are also taking a toll on consumer confidence. Last week the University of Michigan reported that [an index of consumer sentiment](#) dropped in June to its lowest point since the inception of the survey in the late 1940s.

Bill Stoops, a 72-year old retiree living in San Diego, said the hit to asset values from financial-market turmoil in recent months means he is pulling in some spending.

“We thought about planning a trip to France and Germany, maybe Italy—we still want to do that but we don’t see it for this year at all,” he said, adding “I’m no longer talking about replacing my current fun car with another fun car.”

Consumers are also continuing to shift spending to services from goods as many Americans resume more in-person activities such as [travel and dining out](#).

The retail sales report mostly covers spending on goods rather than services, but it said that receipts at bars and restaurants were up 0.7% in May, a sign that Americans are continuing to dine out.

Consumer spending accounts for about 70% of U.S. economic output. A strong labor market and rising wages have helped support spending on services, for which there is pent-up demand from the pandemic.

Craig Johnson, president of Customer Growth Partners, a research and consulting firm, said he anticipates a slowdown in retail spending.

“We’re in a little bit of a watershed in terms of what’s going to happen to the economy,” Mr. Johnson said. “The American consumer—she’s very resilient, but she’s not infinitely resilient.”

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HEADLINE	06/15 Fed biggest interest rate rise since 1994
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/fed-raises-rates-by-0-75-percentage-point-largest-increase-since-1994-11655316170
GIST	<p>The Federal Reserve approved the largest interest-rate increase since 1994 and signaled it would continue lifting rates this year at the most rapid pace in decades to fight inflation that is running at a 40-year high.</p> <p>Officials agreed to a 0.75-percentage-point rate rise at their two-day policy meeting that concluded Wednesday, which will increase the Fed’s benchmark federal-funds rate to a range between 1.5% and 1.75%.</p>

[New projections](#) showed all 18 officials who participated in the meeting expect the Fed to raise rates to at least 3% this year, with at least half of all officials indicating the fed-funds rate might need to rise to around 3.375% this year.

“We’re not trying to induce a recession now. Let’s be clear about that,” Fed Chairman Jerome Powell said at a news conference.

But he said it was becoming more difficult to achieve what is known as a soft landing, in which the economy slows enough to bring down inflation while avoiding a recession. That represented [an implicit concession](#) that the [risks of a downturn could rise](#) as the economy digests tighter monetary policy.

“It is not going to be easy,” Mr. Powell said. “There’s a much bigger chance now that it’ll depend on factors that we don’t control. Fluctuations and spikes in commodity prices could wind up taking that option out of our hands.”

The S&P 500 rose 54.51 points, or 1.5%, to 3789.99, snapping a five-day losing streak. U.S. government bonds rallied after sliding in recent weeks in a selloff that had pushed yields to their highest levels in more than a decade.

Last week, the Labor Department reported the consumer-price index rose 8.6% in May, driven by higher energy prices. Rising fuel prices and supply-chain disruptions from [Russia’s war against Ukraine](#) have sent prices up in recent months.

Mr. Powell’s comments indicated that the Fed “will have to keep jamming on the brakes even if growth struggles, and the market didn’t get it,” said Priya Misra, head of interest-rate strategy at TD Securities. Ms. Misra warned that markets would face higher volatility until inflation is clearly diminishing.

“Today, everyone is cheering, but if inflation has not peaked, we will have to go through the stress of the last few days all over again,” she said.

The Fed has faced growing criticism in recent weeks for not acting sooner to withdraw aggressive stimulus it deployed through most of last year. “Powell took a bold decision today, and it sends the kind of message the economy needs to hear,” said Rep. French Hill (R., Ark).

Expectations of a larger rate rise and a higher path of rate rises had convulsed bond markets in recent days. Over the five days through Tuesday, the two-year Treasury yield had climbed by 0.7 percentage point, the largest such increase since 1982, according to JPMorgan Chase.

Wednesday’s rate increase marked [an abrupt change from unusually precise guidance](#) delivered by many members of the rate-setting Federal Open Market Committee, who had indicated in recent weeks that they would raise rates by a smaller half percentage point, as officials did at their meeting last month.

Mr. Powell said the committee had decided to approve the larger rate rise because of concerns over recent data on inflation and [expectations of future inflation](#), which economists say play a significant role influencing actual price rises. Mr. Powell said officials decided it didn’t make sense to wait until July to move to a larger rate increase.

The committee vote was 10-1, with Kansas City Fed President Esther George [dissenting in favor of a half-percentage-point](#), or 50-basis-point, increase.

“Clearly, today’s 75-basis-point increase is an unusually large one, and I do not expect moves of this size to be common,” Mr. Powell said. “From the perspective of today, either a 50-basis-point or a 75-basis-point increase seems most likely at our next meeting” [on July 26-27](#).

Wednesday's rate increase returns the Fed's benchmark rate to its level in early March 2020, before the Fed slashed it to near zero as the Covid-19 pandemic hit the U.S. economy. But interest rates in the U.S. and many other wealthy nations remain at very low levels historically.

Mr. Powell said he expected the central bank would raise rates to levels designed to slow the economy. "We think that policy is going to need to be restrictive, and we don't know how restrictive," he said.

At the same time, Mr. Powell said he saw no signs of a broader slowdown in the economy. "You're seeing continuing shifts in consumption...but overall spending is very strong," he said.

Wednesday's projections showed officials see the fed-funds rate peaking at around 3.75% by the end of 2023, up from the 2.75% rate that officials projected in March but slightly below what interest-rate futures markets had anticipated earlier this week.

Such a pace of increases would nevertheless represent the most aggressive rate-rise cycle since the 1980s. The central bank has also initiated a program to withdraw stimulus by shrinking its \$8.9 trillion asset portfolio through attrition; the Fed is passively reducing its holdings as those securities mature.

The Fed's [monetary-policy statement](#) removed a line that, in May, had indicated officials expected inflation to return to 2% and for the labor market to remain strong as it raised rates. Mr. Powell said the removal of that sentence reflected the sense that the Fed couldn't reduce inflation to 2% by itself while maintaining a strong labor market.

"The worst mistake we could make would be to fail" to bring down inflation, Mr. Powell said. "It's not an option. We have to restore price stability."

The projections revealed that all but one official expect the unemployment rate to rise over the next two years, an implicit acknowledgment of rising recession risks. The median projection showed the unemployment rate, which stood at 3.6% in May, ending at 3.7% this year before rising to 4.1% in 2024.

"Powell told us policy is going to create a recession, but soft-peddled it enough to leave markets to figure that out for themselves," said Steven Blitz, chief U.S. economist at TS Lombard.

The fed-funds rate, an overnight rate on lending between banks, [influences other consumer and business borrowing costs](#) throughout the economy, including rates on mortgages, credit cards, saving accounts, car loans and corporate debt. Raising rates typically restrains spending, while cutting rates encourages such borrowing.

The U.S. mortgage market has been slammed by the prospect of tighter money, and many lenders were quoting a 30-year fixed rate above 6% on Monday and Tuesday, levels that haven't been reached since 2008. Two large real-estate brokerages announced layoffs on Tuesday as home-purchase demand has stalled.

Mortgage rates stood near 3% at the beginning of the year. "You can't double mortgage rates in a six-month span and live to tell about it," said Lou Barnes, a mortgage banker in Boulder, Colo., who expected housing to go through a sharp slowdown. "At 6%-plus, mortgages will be very painful."

The Commerce Department reported Wednesday that [U.S. retail sales](#)—a measure of spending at stores, online and in restaurants—fell a seasonally adjusted 0.3% in May from the previous month. That was the first decline in month-over-month retail spending this year. [Monthly job gains slowed](#) in May, as did annual wage increases.

Markets began to anticipate the larger 0.75-percentage point increase after a disappointing inflation report on Friday, and again after [The Wall Street Journal reported on Monday](#) that such a move might occur on Wednesday.

	<p>Some former Fed economists said the central bank risked sparking greater market volatility after the surprising shift to a larger rate rise. “It raises questions of whether they’re in control of the situation. It is panicky,” said Vincent Reinhart, chief economist at Dreyfus and Mellon “It will be extremely difficult for them to control the narrative after doing 75 basis points.”</p> <p>Others said they viewed Mr. Powell’s decision as a sign that he was more committed to bring down inflation even if it risked a downturn. “If he’s willing to blow up carefully laid plans to deliver a hawkish surprise, we should take him at his word that he will stay the course,” said Ellen Meade, who retired from the Fed last August as a senior policy adviser.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Waning SPD presence downtown Seattle?
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/waning-police-presence-downtown-not-so-says-seattle-police/ZEWLVF3GUVD75BFMUQQH4HR2YI/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Fewer police in downtown Seattle, specifically along Third Avenue near Pine and Pike streets, is being noticed by some residents and businesses. With that, they say trouble is coming back.</p> <p>On Wednesday, there was still a police mobile precinct outside the McDonald’s on Pine Street. In fact, there has been a near-constant police presence since several murders and other violent crimes occurred in the area in February and March.</p> <p>People in the neighborhood said they have seen fewer officers around over the last few weeks, and now they are noticing problems return.</p> <p>Between Pike and Pine, a SPD vehicle was parked where a navy blue mobile precinct used to be.</p> <p>“And that (police vehicle) is not even all the time. Out of 24 hours it’s maybe four hours, five hours,” said Amir Yousuf, owner of International Cigar and Tobacco. “Some days they are not here, and that’s when things happen.”</p> <p>Several others said they have noticed fewer officers.</p> <p>“I was really appreciative of it, but right now I’m kind of seeing some slacking,” said Robby Watts who works downtown. “There will be a huge drug presence down here, especially around twilight.”</p> <p>People said the neighborhood is still significantly better than before the police crackdown.</p> <p>“I’m glad they cleaned it up myself because it makes it hard for people who want to shop like me,” said Monica Triplet, who was shopping downtown on Wednesday, but some say they are noticing the crime creeping back up.</p> <p>Yousuf showed KIRO7 multiple surveillance videos of trouble that happens when he said police are not in the neighborhood.</p> <p>“The other day, this guy punched (an employee), grabbed the stuff, and ran away,” Yousuf said. In another incident, he said a man tried to use a credit card that did not belong to him. When Yousuf would not accept the card, the man smashed the glass at the counter, took the products and ran away.</p> <p>“As soon as police move, trouble starts, so that’s my worry,” Yousuf said. “If they move out completely, the things will go back. So whatever work they’ve done, it will reverse, go to zero.”</p> <p>KIRO7 asked SPD why there were fewer officers in the neighborhood, and if it was related to staffing and overtime challenges.</p>

	<p>Sgt. Patrick Michaud said in an email, “the number of officers has not changed,” and “the mobile precinct is still dedicated to addressing crime in and around 3rd Avenue.”</p> <p>In fact, SPD said it is in the process of adding a second mobile precinct to the area and plans to “use crime data to rotate the two vehicles through areas in the downtown core as needed.”</p> <p>People said they hope Seattle police will keep their attention on the Pike/Pine core.</p> <p>“This neighborhood needs laser attention, because everybody knows this is famous—not one day, two days, but many, many years,” Yousuf said. “Every time clean up for a few weeks, a few months, and they leave. Then everything comes back, so I’m very afraid.”</p> <p>Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell’s office said, “Mayor Harrell is committed to ensuring 3rd Avenue—and our entire downtown corridor—is safe and welcoming to all neighbors. He’s continuing to work with SPD and community partners on immediate and long-term steps to improve downtown safety and vibrancy.”</p> <p>Despite the reported trouble in the neighborhood, the Downtown Seattle Association (DSA) said foot traffic is returning downtown in a big way.</p> <p>The latest report shows that over a week in June, foot traffic was 76% of pre-pandemic levels, and there were 2.8 million people in downtown Seattle (including residents) during the week of June 5.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Report: SPD 20,000 hours overtime so far
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/report-spd-officers-worked-20k-hours-overtime-during-events-2022-so-far/RVLR2MVRJFKVBHABQLZOMLHJI/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — The Seattle Police Department’s spending on overtime has nearly doubled this year, according to a report presented during the Seattle City Council’s Public Safety & Human Services Committee meeting Tuesday.</p> <p>According to the report, which measures data on SPD spending, 8% of SPD’s budget was spent on overtime staffing from January to March 2022, compared to 4% of the budget from January to March 2021.</p> <p>The three biggest drivers of overtime spending are patrol operations, citywide events — including those held at Seattle Center — and sporting events.</p> <p>“When we are spending 20,000 hours of Seattle Police overtime on things that shouldn’t require a badge and gun officer, like traffic control for sporting events, instead of prioritizing patrol and investigations, we need to rethink how we’re deploying officers,” said council member Andrew Lewis in a tweet Tuesday.</p> <p>While the report did not include the exact number of overtime hours worked at all events citywide, council member Sara Nelson said she was told that the hours for events during the first quarter of 2022 totaled 23,000 hours.</p> <p>From January to March 2022, SPD officers worked about 4,100 hours of overtime at Seattle Kraken games, at a cost of about \$382,000.</p> <p>The number of hours worked by SPD officers at sporting events for other Seattle teams was not provided during the committee meeting.</p> <p>According to city council staff, SPD recovers nearly 100% of costs spent on many sporting events, as the department has contracts with several teams to pay for manned posts at street closures, traffic control and other SPD operations during their games.</p>

	<p>Reimbursement costs for other large events, including those held at Seattle Center and Climate Pledge Arena, reportedly vary from event to event and can often depend on which promoter is coordinating an event.</p> <p>During the meeting, council member Teresa Mosqueda said that the council has requested SPD to look into the costs of using parking enforcement officers instead of or alongside commissioned officers during these events.</p> <p>“This council has been very much — over the last two years — looking at ways to move this work to others within our city who are qualified and skilled in helping to manage traffic and ensure safety at large events,” said Mosqueda.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Seattle plans safe parking for living in RVs
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle/seattle-parking-for-homeless-rv/281-8b783f50-89c8-4884-83b1-48ae1001613e
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — The city of Seattle will spend the next six months and nearly \$2 million to create safe parking for those living in RVs or other vehicles. The plan comes as Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell unveiled his homeless action plan earlier this month.</p> <p>The Low-Income Housing Institute (LIHI) is the group tasked with implementing the “safe lot program,” a contract awarded to them by the King County Regional Homeless Authority.</p> <p>Organizers said they’re looking at about a dozen potential locations. They call it a desperately needed program and a way to connect people to services they badly need.</p> <p>“For folks that are homeless and living in their RV, it is their biggest asset,” said Jon Grant of the LIHI. “These are folks that the homeless system has failed before, so they’ve become self-reliant.”</p> <p>On Tuesday, notices were up in Seattle’s Mount Baker neighborhood warning those living in RVs to move their property or it will be cleared and, in some cases, towed.</p> <p>The city of Seattle is once again enforcing its 72-hour parking rule that was partially put on pause during the COVID-19 pandemic. This comes as Harrell unveiled a new, aggressive response to homelessness earlier this month.</p> <p>In total, Harrell said the city is spending \$173 million toward everything from developing affordable housing to the creation of new so-called safe lots for RV and camper parking.</p> <p>“The program seeks to serve about 34 RVs and about 50 people, and it’s going to have some pretty intensive case management services attached to it as well as behavioral health,” explained Grant. “The goal is to eventually move the people out of RVs and into permanent housing.”</p> <p>The idea itself isn’t new. Two weeks ago, Olympia unveiled its own similar version. Rather than tow, the city is now allowing for free parking permits for campers, but there are restrictions.</p> <p>The city required those living in vehicles along the quarter-mile stretch of Ensign Road to agree to a list of conditions. Those conditions include the proper disposal of trash and human waste and only one lawn chair per person outside of the vehicle. Residents cannot engage in violent behavior.</p> <p>At the time, a spokesperson for the city of Olympia said they have no shelter space – and started what’s believed to be the first permit program in the U.S.</p> <p>Back in Seattle, LIHI will have nearly \$2 million and the next six months to secure a lot and begin hosting campers.</p>

	<p>“This is a very vulnerable population, so there is a huge urgency to get this program set up, and we’re working as quickly as we can to do so,” Grant said.</p> <p>The program starts with camping but hopes to connect residents with whatever long-term services they may need.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Cold weather delays western WA crops
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/cold-weather-is-delaying-western-washington-crops
GIST	<p>Our wet weather is putting a damper on more than just outdoor plans.</p> <p>The dreary spring is delaying critical crops in our state and some seasonal fruits are already a few weeks behind schedule.</p> <p>Record-setting heat this time last year damaged cherry crops in eastern Washington, reducing the pull by 20%.</p> <p>On the other end, sub-freezing temperatures in April limited pollination across the state.</p> <p>Now, any late spring heat is on hold.</p> <p>Entomologist Charlie Colsor says most of Skagit Valley’s prized crops are two to three weeks behind schedule.</p> <p>"If you don’t accumulate enough growing degree days you won’t reach those development stages," Colsor says.</p> <p>What’s worse, the wet weather is a perfect breeding ground for fungal viruses that can attack crops. Higher temps have not hit to start killing off those diseases.</p> <p>However, one bonus of the cool weather, is that farmers aren’t seeing a seasonal fight start up with bugs like the spotted wing drosophila.</p> <p>But once those blooms break, they expect the bugs to catch up.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 SPD response times dramatically up
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/police-response-times-are-dramatically-up-for-people-in-need-the-most-in-seattle
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - Police response times for people in need in Seattle are dramatically up as the Seattle Police Department struggles with a staffing crisis, according to a new report.</p> <p>Since January of 2020, more than 400 officers have left the Seattle Police Department, which is more than 30% of sworn officers on the force.</p> <p>Response times have been a concern for well over a year.</p> <p>But the new data shows that the situation is getting worse, with the highest-priority calls in some parts of Seattle taking on average over 11 minutes.</p> <p>The average and median responses are up in nearly every part of the city when compared to the last four years, according to the report.</p>

The North and Southwest precincts are struggling the most with response times for Priority 1 calls, which means there is an immediate threat to life. Response times on average are just over 11 minutes for those two precincts, which has increased from last year. The Southwest precinct includes West Seattle.

In 2019, response times were over 10 minutes for the North precinct and around eight minutes for the SW precinct for Priority 1 calls.

The West precinct has the quickest average response times at under nine and a half minutes for the highest priority calls,

That is also up from 2019, when it took officers just under seven minutes to respond to calls for help, according to the report. The West precinct includes areas like Queen Anne, Magnolia and downtown Seattle.

When it comes to Priority 3 calls for the West precinct, it takes nearly two hours for officers to respond compared to 2019 when it was on average just over an hour.

These calls are cases that present no significant threat of serious physical harm.

The report also dives into overtime numbers for SPD, and it shows that 55% to 88% of overtime is for patrol, including big events like those at Climate Pledge Arena.

Over the years, Seattle police officers, along with the union representing them, have said that many officers are leaving over the political climate in Seattle. They say officers are not supported by Seattle City Council members, after most called to defund the police in 2020, following protests over the deadly police shooting of George Floyd.

The new data on response times was presented to council members on Tuesday. Outside of Alex Pedersen, Sara Nelson and Debora Juarez, the rest have called to defund police in 2020.

Only one council member on the five-person Public Safety and Human Services Committee commented on the new response times. Council member Alex Pedersen calling them "disturbing" and made a request for officers to stay.

On Tuesday, FOX 13 reached out to the council members who supported defunding police for comment about the latest response times. We only heard back from Council member Lisa Herbold.

"With 300 plus fewer officers in service, we need SPD patrol officers deployment to Priority 1 911 calls to take precedent over directing traffic at events," said Herbold. "In the first quarter of 2022, SPD has deployed officers to 23,000 hours of overtime for events staffing, much of it exclusively for traffic enforcement. Parking Enforcement Officers should be doing much of this work. Let's prioritize deploying officers to overtime work to respond to high-priority public safety incidents, not directing traffic."

During the campaign trail, Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell said long response times were a concern for him and something he planned to address as mayor, if he won.

A spokesperson for Harrell released a statement in response to the new data:

"Every community in Seattle deserves to feel safe and be safe. Facing increasing crime and gun violence, Mayor Harrell is fully committed to addressing SPD's historic staffing crisis and hiring more officers to improve response times and ensure investigations are swift, thorough, and complete."

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HEADLINE	06/15 DOH confirms bird flu in Skagit Co.
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/bird-flu-confirmed-in-skagit-county

GIST	<p>SKAGIT COUNTY, Wash. - A case of bird flu has been confirmed in Skagit County, said the Washington State Department of Health.</p> <p>In a news release, the department said a red-tailed hawk was collected on May 11 and it had tested positive for HPAI H5N1, a strain of avian influenza or bird flu.</p> <p>"We can assume that avian influenza is actively circulating in Skagit County, similar to much of Washington state," officials said Tuesday.</p> <p>Health officials are warning that avian influenza viruses are contagious among certain domesticated bird species, and can sicken and kill chickens, pheasants, and turkeys and other domestic fowl. The virus is often spread to domestic birds through interactions with wild birds.</p> <p>The public are advised to avoid contact with wild birds, especially sick or dead wild birds.</p> <p>People can report sick or dead birds to the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife here. People can also contact Washington State Department of Agriculture's Avian Health Program by calling 1-800-606-3056.</p> <p>Health officials said infections among people are rare but human infections can happen if the virus gets into an individual's eyes, nose, or mouth or is inhaled.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Clallam, Jefferson Co. Covid 'high risk'
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/clallam-jefferson-counties-move-into-high-risk-designation-for-covid-cases-no-hospitalizations-reported
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON - Two Washington counties on the Olympic Peninsula have a "high risk" for COVID transmission in indoor, public spaces, according to latest data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)</p> <p>In Jefferson County, the two-week case rate is 805 cases per 100,000 people. In Clallam County, that rate is 643 cases per 100,000 people. The 14-day case rate is determined by dividing the number of cases that occur in a two-week period by the number of people in the county, then multiple that result by 100,000.</p> <p>At the "high risk" stage, the CDC "strongly" recommends wearing a mask in indoor, public places. There is no statewide or county-specific mask mandate or recommendation to follow.</p> <p>Despite the 'high risk' designation, both counties have zero COVID hospitalizations reported as of June 15 and both counties are seeing daily cases reported trend downward overall.</p> <p>According to the most recent data from the CDC, 53,331 people are fully vaccinated in Clallam County, which accounts for 69% of its population. In Jefferson County, 24,923 people are fully vaccinated, according to the CDC-- that accounts for 77.4% of the county's total population.</p> <p>FOX 13 has reached out to the health departments for the two counties and are waiting to hear back.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Recognizing, commemorating Juneteenth
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/tacoma-communities-across-puget-sound-launch-series-of-events-to-commemorate-juneteenth
GIST	<p>TACOMA, Wash. - Recognition and celebration of Juneteenth is growing across the nation and in Washington. Communities throughout the Puget Sound area are taking time to learn and commemorate the history of the holiday.</p>

Wednesday launched several days full of Juneteenth events in [Tacoma](#). Mayor Victoria Woodards said it was the city's first official Juneteenth celebration. For some, it's also an opportunity for education.

"If I'm still learning as an African American... then that means we can all be vulnerable and honest and say we all need to learn. Because when we learn, when we educate ourselves, we can serve better," said Woodards.

Many across the nation are learning about the [history and significance of Juneteenth](#). In January 1863, Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, stating all enslaved people in the rebelling states of the Confederacy should be free, including Texas. However, for more than two and a half years, the order was not enforced in Texas and African American slaves did not know they were free. After the Civil War ended, a general traveled to Galveston, Texas on June 19, 1865, to inform more than 250,000 slaves of their freedom.

"I call Juneteenth a commemoration because it is a long, long time coming in our history. And we still are not free," said Dr. Marcia Tate Arunga, Dean at the Tacoma campus of Evergreen State College.

Black people have overcome trials and tribulations throughout American history, but even after all those years hardships remain.

"It takes a really big person to stand up and say I recognize I wasn't the one, but I am part of a system that has caused so many problems for African Americans in this country," said Woodards. "We use Juneteenth—we take that day to really educate ourselves, recommit ourselves to making sure that every one of our brothers and sisters—no matter what the color of their skin is—recognize the hardships that they've been through and hardships that systems have caused them. And we do our best to do our part to make a difference."

After calls for social justice and taking a stand against systemic racism, in December 2021, Tacoma City Council recognized Juneteenth as a holiday for city workers. In May 2021, [Washington state proclaimed Juneteenth a legal paid holiday](#).

Nationally, President Joe Biden signed a bill [making it a federal holiday](#) the following month.

"Having it be recognized not only on a state level but a national level only supports that narrative, that truth that we're here, we've been here, we matter, we're important. And I think that's important for us to see in real time, especially in today's climate," said Sascha Nixon, chairman of [BUILD – Washington State Blacks United In Leadership & Diversity](#).

BUILD is a Black resource group for state workers created to provide more equity within state work. Nixon said the group's vision is to have more Black leaders getting higher positions, challenging the status quo and changing the narrative in state employment.

BUILD is hosting its Juneteenth [Freedom Day event](#) on Thursday, June 16 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Tivoli Fountain, on the Capitol Campus in Olympia.

"This isn't just for our community. Other people will be partaking and witnessing and learning and hopefully that will inspire them to be advocates and allies on behalf of the black community," said Nixon.

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HEADLINE	06/15 Kitsap court invalidates breathalyzer results
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/kitsap-judges-ruling-could-eventually-invalidate-tens-of-thousands-dui-convictions-statewide
GIST	WASHINGTON - A Kitsap County District Court ruling invalidated the results of a breathalyzer used by law enforcement that could have state-wide implications in thousands of DUI cases.

All four judges of the court agreed the state toxicologist violated state law when she approved software for the Dräger breathalyzer-- a device that is used to test a person's blood-alcohol level.

The Dräger breathalyzer has been in the field since 2015 and is now used by nearly every law enforcement agency in the state.

The court agreed with lawyers representing Austin Keller that the software approved by then-state toxicologist, Dr. Fiano Couper, did not follow the calculations mandated by state law.

On May 9, 2020, Keller was involved in a single-vehicle crash in Bremerton. Court records showed a Kitsap County sheriff's deputy responded and smelled alcohol on Keller's breath. He gave Keller a field sobriety test and Keller submitted to a blood alcohol test in the field using the portable Dräger breathalyzer.

The test resulted in a 0.132 blood alcohol level. The legal limit in the state is .08.

Keller was arrested and is awaiting trial for driving under the influence.

"This is significant and it was significant to the court who spent three months reviewing this," said Tom Weaver, the attorney of record, representing Keller.

Weaver asked George Bianchi, a Seattle attorney who has been trying DUI cases for years, to join the case

Bianchi agreed and said he tried a similar attack on the state toxicologists' software approval a year ago, but the case did not result in a conviction.

Weaver and Bianchi tried it again with a few tweaks in a motion hearing, challenging the legality of the software approval in March.

All four judges chose to hear the arguments and issued an en-banc ruling this week

The judges issued two rulings: an 89-page ruling explaining their decision to their findings that the software did not follow state law, and an order stopping the use of results of the Dräger machine as evidence in all cases in Kitsap County.

But Bianchi said an attorney in other counties could use the ruling in their DUI cases.

"It can be accepted by other judges throughout the state," said Bianchi. "The state toxicologist approved software that can be used in the Dräger machine, which did not have the proper calculations and is being used by prosecutors and police."

It comes down to a technicality and not the validation of the blood alcohol test.

The machine takes four samples of a person's breath and then calculates the median, the center point of all four results. It then provides a median number that is truncated to several decimal points.

State law said the machine needs to truncate to four decimal points and then round up or down to three decimal points.

Because the rounding was not part of the final calculation, any result the machine produced using the software approved by the state toxicologist violated state law.

"While this ruling certainly makes proving a DUI more difficult, it does not prevent us from proving our cases," Kitsap County Prosecutor Chad Enright told FOX 13 News.

"We are advising law enforcement to continue to take breath tests, but to recognize that they will not be admissible in court and that the case cannot rely solely on breath tests," he said.

Washington State Patrol oversees the State Toxicology Lab and is responsible for distributing the Dräger breathalyzer with the proper software to all local law enforcement in the state.

"They have basically engaged in a cover-up," said Weaver. "The state toxicologist has known about this for years, did nothing about it and allowed all agencies to continue using the software."

In a statement to FOX 13 News, the State Patrol's Director of Communications Chris Loftis wrote, "...this began as a significant administrative oversight made by well-meaning professionals that has now been compounded by years of insufficient attention."

"We have not intentionally submitted false or inaccurate testimony or evidence nor would we ever do so out of respect for the law, the courts, and the rights of all Washingtonians we serve," Loftis said.

Enright would like to see the State Patrol "remedy" the situation by updating the machine's software to match state law requirements as soon as possible.

Loftis said the Patrol was not made aware of the "language discrepancy until June of 2021 and once made aware, quickly notified potentially impacted parties."

He said the patrol has not received a software update but once it does, it will undergo testing and review and then be deployed to law enforcement statewide.

"The state toxicologist and the breath test program should follow their own rules, that's the problem here-- they didn't follow their own rules," said Bianchi.

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HEADLINE	06/15 First-ever self-driving vehicle crash report
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/first-ever-self-driving-vehicle-crash-report-released-nearly-all-involved-teslas-in-washington/
GIST	<p>Over the past 10 months, nearly 400 crashes in the U.S. involved partial or fully automated vehicles. The disclosure, released Wednesday by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, is the first of its kind and part of an ongoing effort by the federal government to track the safety of autonomous vehicles.</p> <p>In Washington state, there were seven crashes in that same period, from July 1, 2021 to May 15, 2022. Details on the crashes are scant: Almost all information that could lend specificity to their circumstances were redacted or left out due to confidentiality requests from the reporting companies. As a result, the exact time, location or severity of the seven Washington crashes is not immediately clear.</p> <p>The new data comes as deaths and serious injuries on American roads — still dominated by individual drivers in large cars — reach levels not seen in decades.</p> <p>“As we gather more data, NHTSA will be able to better identify any emerging risks or trends and learn more about how these technologies are performing in the real world,” Dr. Steven Cliff, NHTSA’s administrator, said in a statement.</p> <p>The Washington crashes occurred in six cities: two in Seattle and one each in Fife, Bothell, Bellevue, Spokane and Ellensburg. Five crashes occurred on a highway, four involved a fixed object and three involved another vehicle. At least three caused property damage; the extent of the damage caused by the other four was listed as “unknown.”</p>

Six of the seven crashes involved a Tesla. That trend is mirrored nationwide. Teslas running the company's Autopilot program were involved in roughly 70% of crashes dating back to last summer. Five of six deaths tallied by NHTSA as part of this dataset involved Tesla vehicles.

The company has more vehicles using some form of automation on the road and its system is set to automatically report crashes, but the crash rate per 1,000 vehicles was nevertheless higher than any other company using automation.

At least 30 seconds before each crash, all seven vehicles were operating Level 2 advanced driver-assistance systems — a step below fully automated driving. Under this category, the car can control both speed and steering, but the driver is never disengaged from the driving process. By contrast, automated driving systems give full control to the vehicle's programming on an extended basis.

In Washington state, four companies are approved to test fully autonomous vehicles, although only one, Amazon's Zoox, is currently doing so, Christine Anthony, communications manager for the Washington State Department of Licensing, said in an email. Zoox is using a closed track to test its self-driving capabilities and is taking to public roads only under control of a driver, Anthony said.

Washington requires only a "light touch" for gaining certification, Anthony said. Companies need to fill out only a one-page form that certifies insurance information and that a person will be present to take over if necessary.

Tesla is not required to seek certification because its vehicles are not technically autonomous. Reema Griffith, executive director of the Washington State Transportation Commission, said Tesla is a prime example of the private sector outpacing government.

"We're moving slow and the industry's moving fast," she said.

The feds' interest in the safety of automated vehicles was piqued by crashes and deaths involving Tesla's Autopilot over the past six years, including nine that killed a total of 14 people in the U.S.

The promise of autonomous vehicles has been long foretold but slow to arrive. Boosters of the technology argue it will prove far safer than human-operated cars. Washington state saw nearly 600 traffic deaths last year, a 16-year high.

"It's so rare for [cars with automation] to get into an accident that whenever it happens it becomes newsworthy," said Sen. Joe Nguyen, D-Seattle, who sits on the state's autonomous vehicle workgroup. But, he added, "If you look at the data, they're more safe than cars now."

In his executive order establishing regulations and a work group on autonomous vehicles, Gov. Jay Inslee wrote, "Roughly 94 percent of automobile accidents are caused by human error, and autonomous vehicle technology may reduce injuries and save countless lives."

But [viral images](#) of vehicles veering into crosswalks, combined with reports of crashes, have raised concerns among safety advocates. In May, 2021 — before the 10-month stretch of data released by NHTSA Wednesday — a Tesla on Autopilot [crashed](#) into a Snohomish County Sheriff's Deputy's car, causing no injuries but extensive damage.

Mike McGinn, former Seattle mayor and current director of the pedestrian advocacy organization America Walks, said real safety improvements will come from changes to the country's roads to slow drivers enough to prevent more deaths. In the meantime, he said, the federal government ought to be taking a heavier hand toward automated vehicles.

"We're all just lab rats in an experiment," he said.

HEADLINE	06/15 Retail slump hammers WA job market
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/retail-slump-hammers-washingtons-job-market-even-as-boeing-and-amazon-push-hiring/
GIST	<p>In a worrying sign for the state's recovery, hiring in Washington stalled last month amid fears over inflation and consumer spending, even as big players like Boeing stepped up their recruitment campaigns.</p> <p>Washington lost 2,300 jobs in May, the first month in the red since January 2021, according to data posted Wednesday by the state Employment Security Department.</p> <p>Although May's figures will likely be revised upward slightly in future reports, the overall trend suggests "you're probably seeing the economy transition into a slower growth" trajectory, said Paul Turek, the ESD's state economist.</p> <p>Washington's unemployment rate for May was 3.9%, down from 4.1% in April. The U.S. unemployment rate in May was 3.6%.</p> <p>Several factors are driving the slowdown, including the absence of the federal pandemic stimulus that had buoyed consumer spending, and rising interest rates as the Federal Reserve tries to rein in inflation, Turek said. On Wednesday, the Fed announced an interest rate hike of 0.75%, the biggest increase since 1994.</p> <p>As a result, even as Washington saw solid gains by tech and manufacturing employers — Boeing actually overtook Amazon in the number of posted job openings — hiring went the other way for many employers that rely on consumer spending.</p> <p>The state's biggest job losses came in retail, which shed 6,600 jobs in May, the most since the first big pandemic-related layoffs in April 2020.</p> <p>A retail slowdown often signals falling consumer confidence as "people are making adjustments due to the higher prices," said Turek.</p> <p>Retailers' woes were also reflected Wednesday by the federal government's monthly report on retail and food service sales for May, which were down 0.3% compared to April.</p> <p>"The retail industry has been shaken up by changes in shopping and location patterns ever since the pandemic," said Jacob Vigdor, an economist with the University of Washington Evans School of Public Policy who has studied state and local job markets. "A stroll around downtown Seattle is all you really need to conclude that this sector hasn't found its new normal yet."</p> <p>Although tourism and foot traffic downtown has steadily risen in recent months, downtown offices are still only a third full, according to cellphone location data from Placer.ai posted by the Downtown Seattle Association.</p> <p>Big job losses were also posted by professional and business services companies, which gave up 3,800 jobs in May. That drop could be a sign of the accumulated economic damage caused by the pandemic, supply chain disruptions, labor shortages and now inflation and the war in Ukraine, Vigdor said.</p> <p>Because many professional and business services companies rely heavily on contracts from other firms, the sector "can be a good leading indicator of optimism or pessimism of the business community at large," added Anneliese Vance-Sherman, an ESD regional economist who covers the Seattle area.</p> <p>Although a single month's job losses could be an aberration, Vance-Sherman said, "this is a sector I will be watching carefully over the next several months."</p>

Another mixed result: Leisure and hospitality businesses added more jobs than any other sector — 2,400 — but are still nearly 22,000 jobs, or 6%, below pre-pandemic employment levels.

May's jobs report had a few bright spots. The state's tech industry is still adding jobs. And manufacturing continues to bounce back.

Boeing is trying to add so many engineers and machinists that the company actually posted more job openings statewide than Amazon did February through May (26,759 to 19,290) to take over [the top spot on the state's employer demand chart](#).

Boeing has also stepped up efforts to keep existing workers. Engineers and technical workers have seen increases in raises, retention bonuses and other compensation, according to the workers' union, the Society of Professional Engineering Employees. This year, SPEEA-represented workers received \$21 million in raises, or about \$15 million more than union contracts require, the union said.

"Boeing is doing everything they can to keep engineering and technical talent," said SPEEA spokesperson Bill Dugovich.

More broadly, despite May's losses, the state's job market is still relatively healthy. The total workforce is larger and the number of people collecting unemployment benefits fell slightly. May's unemployment rate of 3.9% is the same as it was right before the pandemic.

But the potential for a recession remains high if the Federal Reserve's efforts to curb inflation by raising interest rates hit the economy too hard, Turek said. That would mean pain not only for slowing sectors, such as retail, but also for sectors that are still doing well.

If a worldwide recession hits, he said, "people are going to quit buying airliners."

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HEADLINE	06/15 WA OIC fires top aide 'whistleblower'
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/aide-who-blew-the-whistle-on-mistreatment-fired-from-washington-office-of-insurance-commissioner/
GIST	<p>The office of Washington Insurance Commissioner Mike Kreidler has fired a top aide who in February formally complained that Kreidler had bullied him, used crass language and was increasingly "antagonizing staff."</p> <p>The firing Tuesday of Jon Noski, Kreidler's legislative liaison, followed a wave of criticism in recent months from current, former and potential Office of Insurance Commissioner (OIC) employees who said that Kreidler, a six-term Democrat, verbally mistreated staff and also at times used racially offensive language.</p> <p>In an emailed statement Wednesday, Stephanie Marquis, an OIC spokesperson, noted that Noski was an at-will, exempt employee subject to termination at any time.</p> <p>"The decision to end [Noski's] appointment was made following ongoing discussions with Jon about his role in the office as the agency moves forward. Jon has been a valued member of our legislative and policy team and everyone wishes him well in his future endeavors," Marquis' statement said.</p> <p>The agency gave no reason for Noski's firing, nor was an explanation included in his dismissal letter. Noski was terminated the same day he returned to work from medical leave.</p> <p>"I'm not surprised, I'm disappointed," Noski said. "I liked my job and I liked the people I worked with, and I am going to miss being able to work for the OIC."</p>

In April, The Seattle Times and the public radio Northwest News Network reported that Noski's complaint had been quickly dismissed without an investigation on the grounds that no violations of law were being alleged, and the fact that OIC's workplace policies are created under the commissioner's authority.

"As such, there is no basis to consider action against [Kreidler] as the subject of the complaint," wrote Chief Deputy Commissioner Michael Wood in his dismissal of the complaint.

On Wednesday, Steve Valandra, who retired last November as the OIC's deputy commissioner for public affairs, praised Noski's work ethic and expressed dismay at his dismissal.

"Honestly, I think the wrong person is leaving the agency," said Valandra, who's also been critical of Kreidler's treatment of staff. "[Jon] didn't do anything wrong, but he's the one paying the price."

The agency's former legislative director, Lonnie Johns-Brown, also defended Noski. "It's disappointing that Jon got fired for speaking up for himself and other staff about what was very unprofessional behavior on the part of the commissioner," Johns-Brown said.

The Times and Northwest News Network recently reported that a half a dozen former or potential employees in Insurance Commissioners' office recalled incidents where Kreidler was overly focused on race and had used derogatory terms for transgender people and people of Mexican, Chinese, Italian or Spanish descent, as well as asking some employees of color for unusual favors.

Kreidler, the long-serving elected state official, [quickly apologized](#) and committed to sensitivity training.

In his complaint, Noski described a phone call with Kreidler that took place on February 1 after Noski had testified before a legislative committee regarding a bill related to insurance credit scoring. Noski said Kreidler was displeased with how the hearing had gone and blamed Noski.

"The commissioner said that I am an impotent embarrassment who might need to be replaced because of my incompetence," Noski wrote in his complaint. "The commissioner said I must enjoy getting pissed on and asked if he needed to wipe my ass."

Noski said Kreidler's treatment of him was part of a pattern of "inappropriate behavior" that was leading to a high staff turnover rate.

Asked in February about Noski's complaint, Kreidler said he would dispute some of the specifics, but didn't deny the allegations. "I was out of order, I made mistakes," Kreidler said. "It's not something I'm going to replicate in the future."

Noski has retained an attorney and said he's exploring legal options, but declined to say if he felt the firing was retaliatory. He said he didn't regret filing the complaint against Kreidler.

"I think it was a stand worth taking," Noski said. "It's not been easy since I made the complaint, but I stand by it."

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HEADLINE	06/15 Tacoma targets 2 homeless encampments
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article262536617.html
GIST	<p>Two homeless encampments will be removed and cleaned up after the sites had a significant increase in emergency services requests, the city of Tacoma announced Tuesday.</p> <p>The city plans to remove the encampment at Milwaukee Way beginning Tuesday, June 21, and the encampment at Murray Morgan Bridge beginning July 12. The city's encampment-removal policy</p>

	<p>allows a 72-hour posting, but the city has provided more time to allow for increased connection to shelter, the city said in a statement.</p> <p>The city also removed an encampment on June 1 at 6th and South M street due to public safety concerns, and cleared an encampment on May 27 at East 11th Street and Hylebos Bridge because of environmental impacts and health-and-safety concerns of those living in the encampment.</p> <p>The Homeless Engagement and Alternatives Liaison Team estimates 20 or more people are at the Murray Morgan Bridge encampment and 10 to 15 people are at the Milwaukee Way encampment.</p> <p>On the scheduled encampment removal day, a private contractor or city services will clean up the site to meet the city's code standards for public health and safety. Additionally, the city might do site reclamation to prevent the encampment from returning.</p> <p>After the encampments are empty, garbage and debris will be removed. City staff will coordinate with Tacoma police and homeless outreach agencies.</p> <p>The encampment clearings will be the 10th and 11th this year. The city conducted seven removals in 2021.</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	06/16 Linux botnet uses novel way to spread
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/this-linux-botnet-has-found-a-novel-way-of-spreading-to-new-devices/
GIST	<p>Linux users need to be watch out of a new peer-to-peer (P2P) botnet that spreads between networks using stolen SSH keys and runs its crypto-mining malware in a device's memory.</p> <p>The Panchan P2P botnet was discovered by researchers at Akamai in March and the company is now warning it could be taking advantage of collaboration between academic institutions to spread by causing previously stolen SSH authentication keys to be shared across networks.</p> <p>But rather than stealing intellectual property from these educational institutions, the Panchan botnet is using their Linux servers to mine cryptocurrency, according to Akamai.</p> <p>Using other people's hardware to mine cryptocurrency might not be as lucrative as it once was due to the crypto crash currently underway but Panchan's mining rig costs nothing for the troublemakers who use it.</p> <p>Panchan is a cryptojacker that was written in the Go programming language. Cryptojackers abuse others' compute power to mine cryptocurrency.</p> <p>Panchan's P2P protocol communicates in plaintext over TCP but can evade monitoring, according to Akamai. The malware features a "godmode" admin panel, protected with a private key, for remotely controlling and distributing mining configurations.</p> <p>"The admin panel is written in Japanese, which hints at the creator's geolocation," notes Akamai's Steve Kupchik.</p> <p>"The botnet introduces a unique (and possibly novel) approach to lateral movement by harvesting of SSH keys. Instead of just using brute force or dictionary attacks on randomized IP addresses like most botnets do, the malware also reads the id_rsa and known_hosts files to harvest existing credentials and use them to move laterally across the network."</p>

Panchan's authors are apparently fans of the Go programming language, which was created by Google engineers in 2007. Whoever wrote Panchan compiled the malware using Go version 1.18, which [Google released in March](#).

As for the P2P network, Akamai found 209 peers, but only 40 of them are currently active and they were mostly located in Asia.

Why is the education more impacted by Panchan?

Akamai guesses this could be because of poor password hygiene, or that the malware moves across network with stolen SSH keys.

"Researchers in different academic institutions might collaborate more frequently than employees in the business sector, and require credentials to authenticate to machines that are outside of their organization/network. Strengthening that hypothesis, we saw that some of the universities involved were from the same country (e.g., Spain) and others were from the same region (e.g., Taiwan and Hong Kong)," notes Kupchik.

The malware's worm features rely on SSH that are acquired by seeking existing SSH keys or trying easy-to-guess or default credentials.

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HEADLINE	06/16 Facebook Messenger scam duped millions
SOURCE	https://threatpost.com/acebook-messenger-scam/179977/
GIST	<p>For months now, millions of Facebook users have been duped by the same phishing scam that cons users into handing over their account credentials.</p> <p>According to a report outlining the phishing campaign, the scam is still active and continues to push victims to a fake Facebook login page where victims are enticed to submit their Facebook credentials. Unconfirmed estimates suggest nearly 10 million users fell prey to the scam, earning a single perpetrator behind the phishing ploy a huge payday.</p> <p>According to a report published by researchers at PIXM Security, the phishing campaign began last year and ramped up in September. Researchers believe millions of Facebook users were exposed each month by the scam. Researchers assert that the campaign remains active.</p> <p>Facebook has not replied to requests for comment for this report.</p> <p>PIXM asserts the campaign is tied to a single person located in Colombia. The reason PIXM believes the massive Facebook scam is tied to a single individual is because each message links back to code "signed" with a reference to a personal website. Researchers state the individual went so far as responding to researcher inquiries.</p> <p>How the Scam Worked</p> <p>The crux of the phishing campaign centers around a fake Facebook login page. It might not look immediately suspicious, as it copies Facebook's user interface closely.</p> <p>When a victim enters their credentials and clicks "Log In," those credentials are sent to the attacker's server. Then, "in a likely automated fashion," the authors of the report explained, "the threat actor would login to that account, and send out the link to the user's Friends via Facebook Messenger."</p> <p>Any Friends that click the link are brought to the fake login page. If they fall for it the credential-stealing message is forwarded to their Friends.</p> <p>Post-credential phish, victims are redirected to pages with advertisements, which also in many instances also included surveys. Each of these pages generates referral revenue for the attacker, researchers said.</p>

When researchers reached out to the individual taking claim for the phishing campaign the individual “claimed to make \$150 for every thousand visits [to the advertising exit page] from the United States.”

PIXM estimates nearly 400 million U.S.-based page views of the exit page. This, researchers said, “would put this threat actor’s projected revenue at \$59M from Q4 2021 to present.” However, researchers don’t believe the criminal is being honest about their earnings, adding they are “probably exaggerating quite a bit.”

How the Scam Bypassed Security

The perpetrator of this campaign managed to circumvent the social media platform’s security checks by utilizing a technique that Facebook didn’t catch, PIXM said.

When a victim clicks on a malicious link in Messenger, the browser initiates a chain of redirects. The first redirect points to a legitimate “app deployment” service. “After the user has clicked,” the report’s authors explained, “they will be redirected to the actual phishing page. But, in terms of what lands on Facebook, it’s a link generated using a legitimate service that Facebook could not outright block without blocking legitimate apps and links as well.”

Even if Facebook caught on to and blocked any one of these illegitimate domains, “it was trivial (and based on the speed we observed, likely automated) to spin up a new link using the same service, with a new unique ID. We would often observe several used in a day, per service,” researchers said.

PIXM said it was able to access the hacker’s own pages for tracking the campaigns. The data indicated that nearly 2.8 million people fell for the scam in 2021 and 8.5 million have so far this year.

Researchers warn, “As long as these domains remain undetected by use of legitimate services, these phishing tactics will continue to flourish.”

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HEADLINE	06/15 DragonForce gang unleash hacks on India
SOURCE	https://threatpost.com/hackers-india-government/179968/
GIST	<p>According to a new advisory from Radware, a hacktivist group called DragonForce Malaysia, “with the assistance of several other threat groups, has begun indiscriminately scanning, defacing and launching denial-of-service attacks against numerous websites in India.” In addition to DDoS, their targeted campaign – dubbed “OpsPatuk” – involves advanced threat actors “leveraging current exploits, breaching networks and leaking data.”</p> <p>DragonForce Malaysia – best known for their hacktivism in support of the Palestinian cause – have turned their attention on India this time, in response to a controversial comment made by a Hindu political spokesperson about the Prophet Mohammed.</p> <p>According to the advisory, OpsPatuk remains ongoing today.</p> <p>The Casus Belli</p> <p>In a televised debate last month, Nupur Sharma – a spokesperson for the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) – made controversial remarks regarding the age of the Prophet Mohammed’s third wife, Aisha. Widespread outrage followed, involving statements from leaders in the Muslim world, widespread protests, and the outsting of Sharma herself from BJP.</p> <p>Then, beginning on June 10, DragonForce Malaysia entered the fray. Their new offensive against the government of India was first enshrined in a tweet:</p> <p><i>Greetings The Government of India. We Are DragonForce Malaysia. This is a special operation on the insult of our Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. India Government website hacked by DragonForce Malaysia. We will never remain silent. Come Join This Operation ! #OpsPatuk Engaged</i></p>

The new advisory confirms that the group has used DDoS to perform “numerous defacements across India,” pasting their logo and messaging to targeted websites.

The group also “claimed to have breached and leaked data from various government agencies, financial institutions, universities, service providers, and several other Indian databases.”

The researchers also observed other hackers – ‘Localhost’, ‘M4NGTX’, ‘1887’, and ‘RzkyO’ – joining the party, “defacing multiple websites across India in the name of their religion.”

Who are DragonForce Malaysia?

DragonForce Malaysia is a hacker group in the vein of Anonymous. They’re connected by political goals, with a penchant for sensationalism. Their social media channels and website forums – used for everything “ranging from running an eSports team to launching cyberattacks” – are visited by tens of thousands of users.

In the past, DragonForce have launched attacks against organizations and government entities across the Middle East and Asia. Their favorite target has been Israel, having launched multiple operations – #OpsBedil, #OpsBedilReloaded and #OpsRWM – against the nation and its citizens.

According to the authors of the advisory, DragonForce are “not considered an advanced or a persistent threat group, nor are they currently considered to be sophisticated. But where they lack sophistication, they make up for it with their organizational skills and ability to quickly disseminate information to other members.” Like Anonymous and the Low Orbit Ion Cannon, DragonForce weaponizes their own open source DoS tools – Slowloris, DDoSTool, DDoS-Ripper, Hammer, and more – in choreographed, flashy website defacements.

Some members, “over the last year, have demonstrated the ability and desire to evolve into a highly sophisticated threat group.” Among other things, that’s included leveraging publicly disclosed vulnerabilities. In OpsPatuk, for example, they’ve been working with the recently discovered [CVE-2022-26134](#).

“DragonForce Malaysia and its associates have proven their ability to adapt and evolve with the threat landscape in the last year,” concluded the authors. With no signs of slowing down, “Radware expects DragonForce Malaysia to continue launching new reactionary campaigns based on their social, political, and religious affiliations in the foreseeable future.”

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HEADLINE	06/15 Travel-related cybercrime takes off
SOURCE	https://threatpost.com/travel-related-cybercrime-takes-off/179962/
GIST	<p>Researchers are warning a post-COVID upsurge in travel has painted a bullseye on the travel industry and has spurred related cybercrimes.</p> <p>Criminal activity includes an uptick in adversaries targeting the theft of airline mileage reward points, website credentials for travel websites and travel-related databases breaches, according to a report by Intel 471.</p> <p>The impact of the attacks are hacked accounts stripped of value. But also, researchers say the consequences of recent attacks can also include flight delays and cancellations as airlines grapple with mitigating hacks.</p> <p>Your Reward Points Head to Illicit Markets</p> <p>Since January the researcher at Intel 471 detect multiple hacks used by cybercriminals to trade the credentials linked to the traveling websites.</p>

The threat actors were specifically interested in “mileage rewards accounts with at least 100,000 miles,” according to 471. These accounts are used to earn certain rewards on every dollar that is spent. The account credentials that were listed in February belong to U.K.-based users from a major traveling website and two U.S.-based airlines.

“Access to these accounts allowed actors to leverage the rewards to book travel reservations for themselves and other customers,” said researchers. “The accounts and their respective rewards points could be resold to other actors looking to conduct similar types of travel fraud activity,” they added.

The exploitation of rewards-points programs, especially those associated with travel, is not new.

Researchers have tracked several incidents over the years [where hackers have targeted reward points](#). In 2018, a pair of Russian teens have been arrested for infiltrating [more than a half-million online accounts](#), in particular targeting services that offer rewards points.

Researchers point out that as the travel industry rebounds from a COVID-related slump, the industry is once again a prime target for cybercriminals.

Travel-related Identity Theft

Other criminal activities include the targeting of travel-related databases – ripe with employee and traveler personal identifiable information (PII) that threat actors can sell for money.

Researchers observed on travel-related hackers leveraging a database of “40,000 people employed in Illinois”. The stolen database includes PII of employees. Researchers said this type of leaked information plays a role in travel-related fraud – allowing an attacker to generate new identities that can be used to either cross borders or evade authorities.

In one instance, Intel 471 researchers, cybercriminals used PII to create illicit travel documents used for border crossings. “Shortly after the start of the (Russian invasion of Ukraine) war, the actor claimed the insider could facilitate illegal border crossings for Ukrainian males aged 18 to 60” researchers noted.

Some of the traveling bodies including Romania-based Air Traffic Services Administration and Bucharest Airport were targeted by a pro-Russian group of hackers known as KillNet. “Aviation and transportation entities were among KillNet’s most frequented targets in the first half of 2022,” researcher added.

Last month, [an attack on the IT systems of SpiceJet airlines](#) left travelers stranded at airports and causes the delay and cancellation of flights.

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HEADLINE	06/15 MaliBot: new Android banking Trojan in wild
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2022/06/malibot-new-android-banking-trojan.html
GIST	<p>A new strain of Android malware has been spotted in the wild targeting online banking and cryptocurrency wallet customers in Spain and Italy, just weeks after a coordinated law enforcement operation dismantled FluBot.</p> <p>The information stealing trojan, codenamed MaliBot by F5 Labs, is as feature-rich as its counterparts, allowing it to steal credentials and cookies, bypass multi-factor authentication (MFA) codes, and abuse Android's Accessibility Service to monitor the victim's device screen.</p> <p>MaliBot is known to primarily disguise itself as cryptocurrency mining apps such as Mining X or The CryptoApp that are distributed via fraudulent websites designed to attract potential visitors into downloading them.</p>

It also takes another leaf out of the mobile banking trojan playbook in that it employs smishing as a distribution vector to proliferate the malware by accessing an infected smartphone's contacts and sending SMS messages containing links to the malware.

"MaliBot's command-and-control (C2) is in Russia and appears to use the same servers that were used to distribute the [Salinity malware](#)," F5 Labs researcher Dor Nizar [said](#). "It is a heavily modified re-working of the SOVA malware, with different functionality, targets, C2 servers, domains, and packing schemes."

SOVA (meaning "Owl" in Russian), which was [first detected in August 2021](#), is notable for its ability to conduct overlay attacks, which work by displaying a fraudulent page using WebView with a link provided by the C2 server should a victim open a banking app included in its active target list.

Some of the banks targeted by MaliBot using this approach include UniCredit, Santander, CaixaBank, and CartaBCC.

Accessibility Service is a background service running in Android devices to assist users with disabilities. It has long been [leveraged by spyware and trojans](#) to capture the device contents and intercept credentials entered by unsuspecting users on other apps.

Besides being able to siphon passwords and cookies of the victim's Google account, the malware is designed to swipe 2FA codes from the Google Authenticator app as well as exfiltrate sensitive information such as total balances and seed phrases from Binance and Trust Wallet apps.

What's more, Malibot is capable of weaponizing its access to the Accessibility API to defeat Google's two-factor authentication (2FA) methods, such as [Google prompts](#), even in scenarios where an attempt is made to sign in to the accounts using the stolen credentials from a previously unknown device.

"The versatility of the malware and the control it gives attackers over the device mean that it could, in principle, be used for a wider range of attacks than stealing credentials and cryptocurrency," the researchers said.

"In fact, any application which makes use of WebView is liable to having the users' credentials and cookies stolen."

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HEADLINE	06/15 BeanVPN leaks 25M user records
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/beanvpn-leaks-user-records/
GIST	<p>Free VPN software provider BeanVPN has reportedly left almost 20GB of connection logs accessible to the public, according to an investigation by <i>Cybernews</i>.</p> <p>The cache of 18.5GB connection logs allegedly contained more than 25 million records, which included user device and Play Service IDs, connection timestamps, IP addresses and more.</p> <p>Cybernews said it found the database using an Elasticsearch instance during a routine checkup, which the company has now reportedly closed.</p> <p>Still, if picked up by malicious actors, the information could be exploited to de-anonymize and thus identify BeanVPN's users and their approximate location.</p> <p>"The Play Service ID could also be used to find out the user's email address that they are signed in to their device with," explained Aras Nazarovas, a security researcher from Cybernews.</p> <p>According to the VPN provider's website, however, its privacy policy clearly states they don't collect logs of user activity, "including no logging of browsing history, traffic destination, data content or DNS queries."</p>

	<p>The privacy policy also says BeanVPN does not collect IP addresses, outgoing VPN IP addresses, connection timestamps or session durations.</p> <p>These claims would starkly contrast with the information allegedly obtained by Cybernews, which would essentially contain all user data BeanVPN says it does not collect.</p> <p>The company has not immediately responded to <i>Infosecurity Magazine</i>'s request for comment on the matter, and we will update this article with any relevant information as soon as it becomes available to us.</p> <p>VPNs are useful tools to increase one's privacy and security posture. However, according to Etay Maor, senior director of security strategy at Cato Networks, they may be witnessing a reduction in adoption rates for several enterprises because of various post-pandemic trends.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 Cybercrooks smuggle men out Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/cybercriminals-smuggle-ukrainian/
GIST	<p>The war in Ukraine continues to offer cyber-criminals new opportunities to monetize conflict, with threat researchers observing ads offering to smuggle men out of the war-torn country.</p> <p>Intel 471 said criminals are using insiders, including border service staff, to offer people smuggling services on the dark web. Since the start of the war, the Ukrainian government has forbidden any males of fighting age from leaving the country.</p> <p>“Shortly after the start of the war, the actor claimed the insider could facilitate illegal border crossings for Ukrainian males aged 18 to 60,” the report noted.</p> <p>“Accomplices used to facilitate the activity allegedly would transfer a person seeking to cross the Moldova-Ukraine border and bypass official checkpoints. The border crossing records for the person using the actor's service would be backdated on a passport and government databases as part of the scheme.”</p> <p>The conflict is also creating some unusual alliances. A separate report from Cybersixgill argues that Chinese and Russian cyber-criminals are starting to collaborate on the dark web.</p> <p>This began last year when the RAMP forum resurfaced with a new interface making it easier for English and Mandarin speakers to use. However, the ties have arguably grown closer since the start of the war, with some Russian threat actors musing whether they should move to China for safety, according to the firm.</p> <p>“Even within their own Russian-speaking forums, Russian threat actors actively discuss their pursuit of a cyber-criminal alliance with their Chinese counterparts, seeking out the prominent Chinese cybercrime platforms so that they may reach out and develop partnerships,” the report claimed.</p> <p>Intel 471 also claimed the war has led to a surge in travel fraud in the region, with threat actors using insiders in travel companies. Scams are not confined to Eastern Europe; however, with the global travel industry an increasingly lucrative target as the summer holiday season gets going and pandemic restrictions begin to loosen.</p> <p>“Since January 2022, Intel 471 has observed multiple actors across numerous cybercrime forums selling credentials tied to travel-related websites. In February, one such actor listed access to account credentials of UK-based users at a major travel booking website and two US-based airlines,” Intel 471 revealed.</p> <p>“The actor specifically was targeting mileage rewards accounts with at least 100,000 miles. Access to these accounts allowed actors to leverage the rewards to book travel reservations for themselves and other</p>

	customers. Alternatively, the accounts and their respective rewards points could be resold to other actors looking to conduct similar types of travel fraud activity.”
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HEADLINE	06/16 Office 365 feature aids ransomware attacks
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/microsoft-office-365-feature-can-help-cloud-ransomware-attacks/
GIST	<p>Security researchers are warning that threat actors could hijack Office 365 accounts to encrypt for a ransom the files stored in SharePoint and OneDrive services that companies use for cloud-based collaboration, document management and storage.</p> <p>A ransomware attack targeting files on these services could have severe consequences if backups aren’t available, rendering important data inaccessible to owners and working groups.</p> <p>Version numbering tricks</p> <p>Researchers at cybersecurity company Proofpoint note in a report today that the success of the attack relies on abusing the “AutoSave” feature that creates cloud backups of older file versions when users make edits.</p> <p>The only prerequisite for encrypting SharePoint and OneDrive files is to compromise Office 365 accounts, which is easily done through phishing or malicious OAuth apps.</p> <p>After hijacking an account, attackers can use Microsoft APIs and PowerShell scripts to automate malicious actions on large document lists.</p> <p>The trick to finish the file locking stage quicker and make recovery more difficult is to reduce the version numbering limit and encrypt all files more than that limit.</p> <p>This task does not require administrative privileges and can be done from any hijacked account. As an example, the researchers say that an adversary could reduce the number of file versions to "1" and encrypt the data twice.</p> <p>With a file version limit set to “1,” when the attacker encrypts or edits the file twice, the original document will no longer be available through OneDrive and cannot be restored.</p> <p>Another way is to use automated scripts to edit files 501 times, which is above the maximum 500 limit in OneDrive for storing file versions. While this method is "louder" and might trigger some alerts, it still counts as a valid approach.</p> <p>With the document encryption complete, the threat actor can now request a ransom from the victim in exchange for unlocking the files.</p> <p>Stealing the original documents before encrypting them to put more pressure on the victim under the threat of leaking the data, is also feasible and may prove effective, especially if backups exist.</p> <p>Microsoft’s response</p> <p>Proofpoint informed Microsoft of the potential for abuse of the version numbering setting, but the tech giant maintains that this configuration ability is the intended functionality.</p> <p>Moreover, Microsoft told Proofpoint that in cases of unexpected data loss like in the above attack scenario, support agents could help with recovery up to 14 days after the incident. However, Proofpoint reports that it attempted to restore files using that method and failed.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 CHI Health reveals ‘cybersecurity event’
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SOURCE	https://journalstar.com/business/local/chi-health-says-cybersecurity-breach-may-have-exposed-some-patients-data/article_8820b79d-9b2a-5a21-b77d-eb8fc3690541.html?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>CHI Health is notifying patients that one of its vendors had a "cybersecurity event" that may have exposed some patients' protected health information.</p> <p>The data involved includes names, Social Security numbers, medical codes, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses dates of birth and gender.</p> <p>The vendor, MCG Health LLC, determined on March 25 that an unauthorized party had previously obtained personal information that matched data stored on MCG's systems, CHI Health officials said in a press release.</p> <p>MCG, a Seattle-based technology company, provides patient care guidelines to health care providers and health plans across the United States, including CHI Health.</p> <p>The company notified CHI Health officials on April 22 that some of its patients' data may have been involved. CHI Health officials said in their statement that they were hopeful at first that their patients' information had not been accessed or disclosed. However, the health system determined May 11 that "there is a likelihood that the protected health information of some of our patients may have been compromised."</p> <p>No information was available indicating how many CHI patients may have been affected. A CHI Health official referred questions to MCG, which could not be reached immediately Tuesday for comment.</p> <p>MCG did not specify in a June 10 notice of the event on its website how many of its customers may have been impacted. The Sioux Falls Argus Leader reported Monday that the information of about 700 patients of Avera McKennan Hospital and University Health Center had been accessed by an unauthorized party.</p> <p>CHI Health officials said that MCG will notify affected patients by letter on the health system's behalf.</p> <p>MCG, according to the release, has retained a forensic investigation firm to assist and also is coordinating with the FBI.</p> <p>While the exact nature of the event was not specified, data breaches and cyberattacks targeting health systems have increased in the past several years. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services tallied 618 breaches and attacks affecting at least 500 people in 2021.</p> <p>In 2020, an investigation found that an unauthorized party gained access to Nebraska Medicine's and UNMC's shared network. The party deployed malicious software, or malware, and acquired copies of some patient and employee information held on the systems. While the data of thousands of people may have been involved, an investigation found no evidence that individuals' personal information had been used to commit fraud or identity theft as a result of the incident.</p> <p>MCG is offering affected CHI Health patients identity protection and credit monitoring services for two years at no cost. The company also has set up a call center to answer questions related to the event. The call center is available at 866-475-7221 Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Additional information is available on MCG's website, mcg.com. Look for "Notice About Patient and Member Data."</p> <p>CHI Health officials encouraged patients to review account statements and monitor free credit reports. Americans are entitled under federal law to one free credit report a year from each of the three nationwide consumer reporting agencies. To order a report, visit annualcreditreport.com or call toll-free 877-322-8228.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Dark web awash w/breached credentials
SOURCE	https://portswigger.net/daily-swig/dark-web-awash-with-breached-credentials-study-finds?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>An eye-watering 24 billion usernames and passwords available on the dark web – an increase of 65% in just two years, according to a new study from Digital Shadows.</p> <p>Some combinations are advertised more than once on forums, but even after removing duplicates, Digital Shadows still found that 6.7 billion unique credentials exist – an increase of approximately 1.7 billion or 34% in two years.</p> <p>A study (PDF) from the threat intel firm, published on Wednesday (June 15), found that despite this, consumers continue to use easy to guess passwords.</p> <p>For example, around 0.46% of all passwords – nearly one in every 200 – is ‘123456’. Keyboard combinations such as ‘qwerty’ or ‘lq2w3e’ are also all too commonplace.</p> <p>In response to questions from <i>The Daily Swig</i>, Digital Shadows said most of the credentials collected and analyzed in its report come from organizations whose databases have been breached before password hashes are cracked and passwords leaked on cybercriminal forums. Login credential initially stolen through phishing attacks, and often using specialist phishing kits with another significant vector of credential pwnage.</p> <p>Easy-to-use tools commonly available through criminal marketplaces at minimal cost or for free make it straightforward for even unskilled script kiddies to crack weak passwords.</p> <p>Simply adding a ‘special character’ (such as @ # or _) to a basic 10-character password makes it far harder to crack passwords and therefore makes it much less likely that a person will fall victim to an attack, with criminals instead attacking accounts that are easier to breach.</p> <p>Digital Shadows reports that the sale of stolen and cracked credentials remains a mainstay of sales through cybercrime forums and marketplaces.</p> <p>"Stolen credentials are one of the most crucial access tokens for a variety of cybercriminals and state-sponsored groups' operations," Digital Shadows told <i>The Daily Swig</i>. "As such, the market for them is constantly florid and threat groups scramble to put their hands on these valuable assets."</p> <p>Progressively worse</p> <p>Chris Morgan, senior cyber threat intelligence analyst at Digital Shadows, said that despite industry attempts to move beyond passwords as an authentication mechanism, the issue of breached credentials remains pressing – and is becoming progressively worse over time.</p> <p>“Criminals have an endless list of breached credentials they can try but adding to this problem is weak passwords which means many accounts can be guessed using automated tools in just seconds,” Morgan said.</p> <p>Morgan added: “In just the last 18 months, we at Digital Shadows have alerted our clients to 6.7 million exposed credentials. This includes the username and passwords of their staff, customers, servers, and IoT devices.</p> <p>“Many of these instances could have been mitigated through using stronger passwords and not sharing credentials across different accounts,” they concluded.</p> <p>In a blog post, Digital Shadows summarizes the findings from its research as well as offering advice on password security best practices.</p>

	Its top tips include advising users to switch to using a password manager and adding multi-factor authentication to their online accounts so that a password alone (even if compromised) is not enough to gain access.
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HEADLINE	06/14 Ransomware threat drives IT workers quit
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/the-unrelenting-threat-of-ransomware-is-driving-cybersecurity-workers-to-quit/?web_view=true
GIST	<p>Security researchers have warned of "increasing and unsustainable stress levels" in the cybersecurity workforce resulting from persistent ransomware threats and looming, large-scale attacks, which are pushing security professionals towards abandoning the industry altogether.</p> <p>A report by cybersecurity company Deep Instinct found that 46% of senior and executive-level cybersecurity professionals have considered quitting the industry due to stress.</p> <p>This is being driven by an "unrelenting threat from ransomware", researchers found, as well as supply chain attacks on a scale similar to the 2020 SolarWinds hack and 2021's Kaseya ransomware incident, both of which had far-reaching and long-lasting consequences for organizations impacted.</p> <p>The burden of preventing such attacks weighs heavily on those tasked with keeping networks and wider organizational systems secure, Deep Instinct found. More than 90% of cybersecurity professionals are stressed in their roles, with a "significant proportion" of professionals conceding that this is negatively impacting their ability to do their jobs.</p> <p>Those in leadership positions are likely to be feeling pressures of the industry more acutely, the report found: one in three C-Suite executives – including CISOs, CTOs, ITOs and IT strategy directors – said they were 'highly stressed'.</p> <p>"More cybersecurity professionals than ever are seriously considering leaving the industry permanently as a result of these pressures – with potentially catastrophic consequences for the organizations that rely on their vigilance," the report said.</p> <p>Burnout and fatigue in cybersecurity have been exacerbated by the move to remote working, which has made network security more challenging for organizations.</p> <p>The diminished oversight that cybersecurity teams have on devices in a remote setting makes it more difficult to ensure IT security practices are being followed, many IT teams are still not sufficiently equipped to address the challenges that remote working presents.</p> <p>This responsibility puts more pressure on to CISOs and other cybersecurity leaders: 52% of C-suite professionals surveyed by Deep Instinct said that securing a remote workforce was their biggest cause of concern. This was followed by the impact of digital transformation on the organization's security posture, which researchers said highlighted the challenges of securing hybrid environments.</p> <p>"Senior cybersecurity executives acknowledge that their stress levels are impacting decision-making and can have implications for the security posture of companies," the report added.</p> <p>"The stress we're seeing across the cyber industry appears to be accelerating the exodus of talented people from the industry: a particular challenge when many cybersecurity defences and mitigation processes are human-dependent, requiring constant monitoring and intervention."</p> <p>SecOps teams are also burdened by larger workloads and longer hours as a result of persistent cybersecurity threats. Nearly half of respondents that sat outside of the C-suite (47%) said they felt pressured to stop every threat, despite acknowledging that it was impossible to do so, while 43% felt there was an expectation to always be on call or available.</p>

The researchers identified a "widespread adoption of completely counter-productive measures" to alleviate stressors, such as switching off "overwhelming" alerts.

A lack of tools to perform their role properly and [staff shortages](#) were each cited as major challenges by 40% of respondents, respectively.

"The results show there is not one clear winner which reinforces why stress levels are so high," researchers said. "Without a singular focus on one type of attack, resources are stretched thin and it's obvious to see how a SecOps team may feel deflated against the challenges they face."

The 'universal threat' of ransomware

Cyber criminals have benefitted from the move to remote working, with ransomware incidents [having increased significantly](#) during the past two years.

While organizations are typically advised not to pay hackers in exchange for encrypted data, cybersecurity professionals are doing so in order to avoid downtime and the associated reputational damage should the attack become public.

More than a third (38%) of survey respondents admitted to both experiencing a ransomware attack, and paying the ransom in exchange for the decryption key, compared to 62% that didn't pay. And yet, paying hackers off does not guarantee the safe return of company data: 46% of those who paid said records or sensitive information was exposed regardless, while 45% were unable to restore all their data. A further 23% of respondents were hit by a subsequent extortion demand after paying the ransom.

Deep Instinct's [Voice of SecOps 2022 report](#) was based on the responses of 1,000 senior cybersecurity professionals from companies in the US, UK, Germany and France.

All interviewees worked for businesses with 1,000 employees or more, and for businesses with annual revenues of at least US \$500m across financial services, retail and eCommerce, healthcare, manufacturing, public sector, critical infrastructure, and technology.

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HEADLINE	06/15 Ukraine war attracts Belarusian hackers
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2022-06-15/ukraine-war-attracts-belarusian-hackers-in-fight-vs-putin
GIST	<p>Russia's military began sending large numbers of weapons and troops into Belarus in late January. The official purpose of the movement was a joint military exercise, but Belarus, which has a 650-mile border with Ukraine and a government closely aligned with Moscow, was also a logical staging point for Russian President Vladimir Putin to carry out an invasion.</p> <p>Several days after the troops arrived weird things started happening to the computer systems that ran the Belarus national railway system, which the Russian military was using as part of its mobilization. Passengers gathered on train platforms near Minsk, the capital, watched as information screens flickered and normal messaging was replaced by garbled text and an error message. Malfunctioning ticket systems led to long lines and delays as damaged software systems caused trains to grind to a halt in several cities, according to railway employees and posts that circulated on Belarusian social media.</p> <p>The cause of the delays was a ransomware attack in which hackers had encrypted crucial files on the railway's computer systems, rendering them inoperable. The perpetrators of such attacks usually demand money in exchange for unlocking the seized files. But the assailants in this case, a group of hackers identifying themselves as the Cyber Partisans, said they would provide the key to unlock the computers only if Russian troops left Belarus and the Belarusian government freed certain political prisoners.</p>

The authoritarian government of Alexander Lukashenko was well aware of the Cyber Partisans, who'd become a key part of an [opposition movement openly trying to overthrow his government](#). Lukashenko, a former Soviet official who's been president of Belarus since 1994, is widely known as Europe's "last dictator." In 2020 he [claimed victory](#) in an election that the US and other countries have declared fraudulent, then ordered a violent response to the subsequent protests. The result has been a grinding conflict between his government and a broad movement of dissidents.

The anti-Lukashenko movement has been notable for the way it's mixed analog forms of popular protest with online activism. Lukashenko's opponents started by breaking into the websites of the government and state news agencies, a form of politically motivated hacking with a long history. Since then they've begun to branch into cyberattacks that result in physical damage, a tactic traditionally seen as the domain of state-sponsored agents. The result is beginning to look like a new model for revolutionary groups seeking to wage asymmetrical warfare, says [Gabriella Coleman](#), a Harvard professor and an expert on hacking culture. "They are really innovating in a way I have not seen before," she says of the Cyber Partisans. "It's like traditional forms of sabotage, but using computer methods. What they are doing has taken hacktivism to the next level."

In the purest sense, the cyberattack on the train system didn't succeed. Russian troops didn't leave the country, and Belarus didn't free the political prisoners. But the train system remains impaired. The operation also signaled a major escalation in what had been a domestic conflict. The Belarusian dissidents now see a single, broader struggle against both Lukashenko and Putin and have begun to join forces with an informal and chaotic global coalition of pro-Ukraine hackers.

These groups have targeted dozens of Russian government agencies, dumping huge troves of stolen emails and documents online. Andriy Baranovych, a spokesman for the Ukrainian Cyber Alliance, one of the groups working with the Cyber Partisans, says that while information gathering is a goal of his organization, it's also moving past that: "Political information has little value now. We are trying to cause disorder, disruption, deception—anything that could delay or stop Russia's actions."

Aliaksandr Azarau, a former Minsk police chief, arrived at a cafe near Warsaw's central rail station one day in mid-March to tell the story of how he joined what he considers a war against Lukashenko's government. Azarau, 45, is a stocky guy in a checked shirt and black jacket, with a piercing stare. He mentioned that he has to be wary of spies as he travels around Poland and regularly glanced at his phone for updates on the fighting in Ukraine.

For more than two decades, Azarau was a police officer in Belarus, working as a detective in a department focused on human trafficking, illegal immigration, and religious extremism. He rose to become a lieutenant colonel, heading a unit of an organized crime and corruption agency. He says he never supported Lukashenko but avoided criticizing the government until August 2020, when he says he personally witnessed fraud in the presidential election and overheard commanders issue what he described as illegal orders to attack and arrest peaceful pro-democracy protesters.

Azarau quit the force and fled to Poland, where he was later joined by his wife and two young daughters. He quickly fell in with the Belarusian exile community in Warsaw and signed up to join [ByPol](#) (the name is shorthand for Belarus Police), a group of self-described "honest officers" from Belarus's law enforcement community who were advocating for free and fair democratic elections.

ByPol's members weren't hackers. But they soon linked up with the Cyber Partisans, who showed how their skills could help gather evidence of human-rights violations that could be used to argue for sanctions against government officials.

The hackers broke into government websites. They disclosed mortality statistics indicating that tens of thousands more people in Belarus died from Covid-19 than the government had publicly acknowledged. They also began releasing data including secret police archives, lists of alleged police informants, personal information about top government officials and spies, video footage gathered from police drones and detention centers, and secret recordings of phone calls from a government wiretapping system. ByPol

members, with their knowledge of the inner workings of the regime, helped to analyze, authenticate, and distribute the hacked files.

Azarau says that information gathered by the hackers has been vital in documenting police abuses. But the cyberattacks were useful for doing more than simply embarrassing Lukashenko. One database the Cyber Partisans broke into included 10 million passport and driver's license photos, which ByPol has used to create its own facial recognition system. It's used it to identify suspected spies, as well as police officers shown attacking protesters in videos. If the group has a picture of a suspected Belarusian spy, it runs a check on the photograph. "People ask us, 'Who is this person?' We can say that it is not a problem, if it is just a student," Azarau says. "Or we can see if it is a spy."

These operations have clearly spooked Lukashenko's government. Last November the country's Supreme Court branded the hackers as terrorists and criminalized participation in several groups including the Cyber Partisans and ByPol, according to the prosecutor general's office. In March, Lukashenko [expounded](#) on the danger of cyberattacks. "We all tremble at nuclear weapons," he said, "but cyberweapons are even more terrifying."

As Belarus became involved in Russia's mobilization for an invasion of Ukraine, ByPol grew hungry to undermine Lukashenko's government by, for example, sabotaging signaling systems to slow down trains. The tactic has echoes of Soviet resistance fighters who undermined the Nazi regime during World War II by using explosives to blow up the tracks. "A lot of Russian ammo and weapons came to Belarus and goes through our territory to Ukraine, to kill Ukrainians," says Azarau. "So we decided to wage a railway war." While ByPol's operatives have used arson to carry out this strategy, he says, their allies could provide similar results by digital means.

The Cyber Partisans said they'd paralyzed trains in the Belarusian cities of Minsk and Orsha, as well as the town of Osipovichi. Sergei Voitehowich, a former employee of the state-owned Belarusian Railway company, acknowledges that the attacks didn't stop Russia's operations. But Voitehowich, who now helps operate an online forum for dissident railway workers and documents the damage caused by resistance groups, says that ByPol's physical attacks on the rail network, combined with the Cyber Partisans' digital attacks on its computer systems, disrupted the transport of Russian military equipment in Belarus for a week in March.

The Belarusian government refused to discuss the consequences of the January hack on the rail system, though Ivan Tertel, the head of Belarus's KGB intelligence agency, has publicly complained about cyberattacks on infrastructure and said foreign adversaries knew who was responsible but had chosen to turn a blind eye. Lukashenko's government never met the dissidents' demands, opting instead to try to repair what damage it could or replace its infected equipment entirely.

Voitehowich questions how effective the recovery attempts have been. "Logistical systems are not working, information about transferring and moving trains is not available, and some internal documentation is not accessible," he says. He estimates that 90% of the systems have been repaired, but that residual problems remain.

It's not possible to independently verify these claims. But there has been evidence of disruptions. In March, Belarusian Railway posted a statement online saying it was opening 50 additional ticket offices to meet demand while it worked to restore its systems.

Unlike ByPol, the Cyber Partisans are determined to remain entirely anonymous, saying they fear for their safety given the violent record of the Lukashenko regime. Even their ostensible public representative, a Belarusian citizen named Yuliana Shemetovets who lives in New York City and appears at conferences on their behalf, says she doesn't know their identities.

After several months of communication with Bloomberg Businessweek over encrypted chat channels, a member of the group agreed to a rare video interview, on the condition that he be allowed to remain anonymous and the technical details of the chat not be published.

The hacker sat silhouetted in a darkened room, wearing a hoodie. The Cyber Partisans' red-and-black logo was projected on a large screen behind him. He used a device to disguise his speech, which only partially concealed what sounded like an Eastern European accent. The Cyber Partisans consist of about 60 people, he said, mostly Belarusian citizens with backgrounds in computers. Most of them work on tool development and data analysis, with only about 10 volunteers participating in the hacking operations the group carries out. He flatly refused to discuss his personal life in even the broadest ways, for fear of accidentally revealing details that could be used to identify him.

The nature of the Cyber Partisans' operations have led to speculation that they're a front for a government hostile to Lukashenko's. In January, security researcher Juan Andres Guerrero-Saade [wrote](#) that government-backed groups can masquerade as hacktivists to give themselves plausible deniability and "to imbue their leaks with legitimacy not afforded by the obvious intervention of a government." But he also determined that the Cyber Partisans had the characteristics of a "grassroots endeavor."

In his video chat with Bloomberg Businessweek, the Cyber Partisan laughed off this suggestion, saying that the group isn't financed or controlled by any government agency. "We're still amateur hacktivists," he said. "We're just highly motivated and stubborn. If we had the budget of a government agency we would have carried out attacks every day and brought the terroristic regime of Lukashenko to its knees very quickly."

What the Cyber Partisans do acknowledge is Putin's war has broadened their goals—and helped them forge a new set of alliances with hackers in Ukraine. "Ukrainians are now fighting not only for their freedom but for the Belarusian independence as well," the hacker said.

The political hacking movement within Ukraine began building in earnest following Russia's invasion of Crimea in 2014. The Ukrainian Cyber Alliance formed in 2016 to strike back against Russia and has a track record of carrying out successful data breaches. In 2016 and 2017 it claimed responsibility for compromising Russian Ministry of Defense servers and stealing and publishing emails from an adviser close to Putin, in addition to those of alleged Russian militants and propagandists.

At the time the Ukrainian government was ambivalent at best about much of what such groups were doing. Authorities accused the Ukrainian Cyber Alliance of hacking Odessa's international airport and placing an offensive message about the environmental activist Greta Thunberg on an electronic display, and some of its members were scheduled to appear in court in February in connection with the incident.

The group denies involvement, but in any case the proceedings were postponed, and the hackers now say they're working with the Ukrainian government as part of its call for a [makeshift "IT Army"](#) to help in the war effort. The volunteers have carried out targeted attacks on Russian banks and energy companies and also hacked Russian state media websites to counter the Kremlin's propaganda.

The alliance between Ukrainian hackers and Belarusian dissidents has been a natural outcome of the Russian invasion, says the Ukrainian Cyber Alliance's Baranovych. "We share something on Belarus of some use to them, and they helped us with accesses to Russian systems," he says.

While there was a widespread expectation that Russia would carry out major cyberattacks against Ukraine as part of any invasion, the grassroots operations on the Ukrainian side have been a notable—and surprising—aspect of the conflict.

One European technology industry executive, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, says he joined the hacking effort in the early weeks of the conflict and worked with mobile phone network specialists to perform cyberattacks on the phones of Russian military officials, rendering them unable to make or receive calls. He demonstrated the technique for Bloomberg Businessweek, but its practical impact could not be independently verified.

The idea was to do anything that might slow the Russians' ability to organize the invasion, he says. Later the hackers penetrated Russian phone networks and performed what's known as a man-in-the-middle attack to intercept calls and messages. Fearing he was getting too deeply involved in an effort that could result in retribution, the executive pulled back from the hacking operation. "I understand it's war and we need to do this," he says. "But there was a point when it just felt it was becoming too dangerous for me to be part of it."

The life of a professional revolutionary has been hard on Azarau. His Belarusian bank accounts were seized last year, and security agents in Belarus searched the home of his 68-year-old mother and confiscated electronic devices at her property in a village near Minsk. People who've called his mother by phone have themselves been subsequently visited by police. The harassment, which Azarau interprets as an attempt to punish him, has had a chilling effect on friends and family, who are now afraid to contact his mother, leaving her isolated.

He says he's pretty sure he's being followed in Warsaw as well. ByPol has identified Belarusian military intelligence agents who it says have traveled to Poland to infiltrate dissident groups. Earlier this year, says Azarau, a Belarusian spy was operating in Poland disguised as a refugee and had been tasked with "eliminating" ByPol's leadership. Azarau recognized the man from his former police days, and ByPol subsequently exposed his identity online. The alleged spy fled a refugee center where he was living and left his passport behind. "Now nobody knows where he is," Azarau says.

Lukashenko's government has proved willing to go to extremes to fight its political opponents. Last year it caused international outrage when it [forced a passenger plane to land in Minsk](#) and arrested a dissident Belarusian journalist who'd been on board. Last August one prominent opposition figure was [found hanged](#) in a park in Ukraine. Police said they suspected the incident may have been a murder disguised as suicide. In April, news agency AFP reported that the Belarusian government said it had arrested four men whom it suspected of sabotaging train equipment. The announcement included video of gruesomely injured men lying on the ground. The government said it had shot the suspects because they were resisting arrest.

At the same time, the hacking and sabotage are putting "huge pressure" on Lukashenko's regime, says Pavel Latushko, a former Belarusian ambassador and minister of culture who now leads an opposition group called [National Anti-Crisis Management](#). In his office in central Warsaw, Latushko has five framed documents on his wall displaying criminal charges Belarusian authorities have filed against him, accusing him of involvement in terrorism, extremism, and conspiracy to seize state power—he jokes that he's had seven charges filed against him in total, but he doesn't have enough room. Lukashenko, he says, once personally threatened to strangle him.

Given the violence of the Lukashenko regime and the devastating Russian assault on Ukraine, Latushko says hackers like the Cyber Partisans should feel little restraint about how they hit back. "All activities under the movement of resistance are legal," he says. "Everybody who can struggle against the occupation of the Russian Federation and the puppet government of Lukashenko—you can use all the instruments."

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HEADLINE	06/15 Russia taking over Ukraine internet
SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/ukraine-russia-internet-takeover/
GIST	<p>WEB PAGES IN the city of Kherson in south Ukraine stopped loading on people's devices at 2:43 pm on May 30. For the next 59 minutes, anyone connecting to the internet with KhersonTelecom, known locally as SkyNet, couldn't call loved ones, find out the latest news, or upload images to Instagram. They were stuck in a communications blackout. When web pages started stuttering back to life at 3:42 pm, everything appeared to be normal. But behind the scenes everything had changed: Now all internet traffic was passing through a Russian provider and Vladimir Putin's powerful online censorship machine.</p> <p>Since the end of May, the 280,000 people living in the occupied port city and its surrounding areas have faced constant online disruptions as internet service providers are forced to reroute their connections through Russian infrastructure. Multiple Ukrainian ISPs are now forced to switch their services to Russian</p>

providers and expose their customers to the country's vast surveillance and censorship network, according to senior Ukrainian officials and technical analysis viewed by WIRED.

The internet companies have been told to reroute connections under the watchful eye of Russian occupying forces or shut down their connections entirely, officials say. In addition, new unbranded mobile phone SIM cards using Russian numbers are being circulated in the region, further pushing people towards Russian networks. Grabbing control of the servers, cables, and cell phone towers—all classed as critical infrastructure—which allow people to freely access the web is considered one of the first steps in the “Russification” of occupied areas.

“We understand this is a gross violation of human rights,” Victor Zohora, the deputy head of Ukraine’s cybersecurity agency, known as the State Services for Special Communication and Information Protection (SSSCIP), tells WIRED. “Since all traffic will be controlled by Russian special services, it will be monitored, and Russian invaders will restrict the access to information resources that share true information.”

KHERSONTELECOM FIRST SWITCHED its internet traffic to a Russian network on April 30, before flipping back to Ukrainian connections for the majority of May. However, things appear to have shifted permanently since May 30. All of KhersonTelecom’s traffic is now being routed through Miranda Media, a Crimea-based company [that’s itself connected to Russian national telecom provider Rostelecom](#). (Miranda Media was set up after Putin [annexed Crimea in 2014](#)). The day after KhersonTelecom made its latest switch, state-controlled Russian media outlet RIA Novosti [claimed](#) the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia areas were officially being moved to Russian internet connections—days earlier, the outlet [said](#) the regions were also going to start using the Russian telephone code +7.

Zohora says that across occupied regions of Ukraine—including Kherson, Luhansk, Donetsk, and Zaporizhzhia—there is a patchwork of around 1,200 different ISPs. “We understand that most of them are forced to connect to Russian telecom infrastructure and reroute traffic,” Zohora tells WIRED.

“Unfortunately, there are cases of massive routing of traffic of Ukrainian operators across Russian channels,” says Liliia Malon, the commissioner of Ukraine’s telecom regulator, the National Commission for the State Regulation of Electronic Communications. “Ukrainian networks are partially blocked or completely disconnected.”

Technical analysis confirms that the connections are switching. Internet monitoring company [Cloudflare](#) [has observed](#) KhersonTelecom’s traffic passing through Miranda Media for more than two weeks in June.

Doug Madory, director of internet analysis at monitoring firm Kentik, has observed around half a dozen networks in Kherson connecting to the provider. “It’s not a one-time thing,” Madory says. “Every couple of days, there’s another company getting switched over to Russian transit from Ukraine.”

Since the start of Putin’s war in February, disrupting or disabling internet infrastructure has been a common tactic—controlling the flow of information is a powerful weapon. Russian missiles have [destroyed TV towers](#), a cyberattack against a [satellite system had knock-on impacts across Europe](#), and disinformation has tried to break Ukrainian spirits. Despite frequent internet blackouts, Ukraine’s [rich ecosystem of internet companies](#) has rallied to keep people online. While Ukrainian troops are [successfully launching counterattacks](#) against Russian occupation in the south of the country, Kherson remains controlled by invading forces. (In March, it became the first major city to fall into Russian hands, and its residents have lived under occupation for around 100 days, reporting [numerous incidents of torture](#).)

“It’s one thing to take over a city and to control the supply lines into the city, the flow of food or fuel,” says David Belson, head of data insight at Cloudflare, who has [written about internet control in Kherson](#). But, he says, “controlling internet access and being able to manipulate the internet access into an occupied area” is a “new front” in the conflict.

There are multiple ways Russian forces are taking over internet systems. First, there is physical access—troops are seizing equipment. Spokespeople for two of Ukraine’s biggest internet providers, Kyivstar and Lifecell, say their equipment in Kherson was switched off by Russian occupying forces, and they don’t have any access to restore or repair equipment. (Throughout the war, internet engineers have been [working amid shelling and attacks to repair damaged equipment](#)). The SSSCIP says 20 percent of telecommunications infrastructure across the whole of Ukraine has been damaged or destroyed, and tens of thousands of kilometers of fiber networks are not functioning.

Once Russian forces have control of the equipment, they tell Ukrainian staff to reconfigure the networks to Miranda Media, Zohora says. “In case the local employees of these ISPs are not willing to help them with the reconfiguration, they are able to do it by themselves,” Zohora says. The SSSCIP, he adds, has advised staff not to risk their own lives or the lives of their families. “We hope that we are able to liberate these lands soon and this temporary period of blackmailing of these operators will pass off,” Zohora says, adding it is unlikely that communications in the region can be restored before the areas are liberated.

For the time being, at the very least, this means connections will be routed through Russia. When Gudzy Dmitry Alexandrovich, the owner of KhersonTelecom, switched his connection to Miranda Media for the first time at the start of May, he claims some customers thanked him because he was getting people online, while others chastised him for connecting to the Russian service. “On May 30 again, like on April 30, everything absolutely everything fell and only Miranda’s channels work,” Alexandrovich says in a translated online chat. In a long [Facebook post](#) published on the company’s page at the start of May, he claimed he wanted to help people and shared photos of crowds gathering outside KhersonTelecom’s office to connect to the Wi-Fi.

Russia is also trying to control mobile connections. In recent weeks, a mysterious new mobile company has popped up in Kherson. [Images show blank SIM cards—totally white with no branding](#)—being sold. Little is known about the SIM cards; however, the mobile network appears to use the Russian +7 prefix at the start of a number. Videos [reportedly](#) show crowds of citizens gathering to collect the SIM cards. “The Russian forces realize they’re at a disadvantage if they keep using Ukrainian mobile networks,” says Cathal Mc Daid, the chief technology officer at mobile security company AdaptiveMobile. The company [has seen two separatist mobile operators in Donetsk and Luhansk](#) expanding the territory they are covering to newly occupied areas.

WHO CONTROLS THE internet matters. While most countries place only limited restrictions on the websites people can view, a handful of authoritarian nations—including [China](#), [North Korea](#), and Russia, severely limit what people can access.

Russia has a [vast system of internet censorship and surveillance](#), which has been growing in recent years as the country tries to implement a [sovereign internet project that cuts it off from the rest of the world](#). The country’s [System for Operative Investigative Activities, or SORM](#), can be used to read people’s emails, intercept text messages, and surveil other communications.

“Russian networks are fully controlled by the Russian authorities,” Malon, the Ukrainian telecom regulator, says. The rerouting of the internet in occupied Ukrainian areas, Malon says, has the goal of spreading “Kremlin propaganda” and making people believe Ukrainian forces have abandoned them. “They are afraid that the news about the progress of the Ukrainian army will encourage resistance in the Kherson region and facilitate real activities,” Zohora says.

At the heart of the rerouting is Miranda Media, the operator in Crimea that appeared [following the region’s annexation in 2014](#). Among “partners” listed on its website [are](#) the Russian security service known as the FSB and the Russian Ministry of Defense. The company did not respond to a request for comment.

In many ways, Crimea may act as an example of what happens next in newly occupied areas. “Only in 2017, Crimea was completely disconnected from Ukrainian traffic. And now, as far as I know, it’s only Russian traffic there,” says Ksenia Ermoshina, an assistant research professor at the Center for Internet and

Society and an affiliated researcher at the Citizen Lab. In January last year, Ermoshina and colleagues [published research](#) on how Russia has taken control of Crimea's internet infrastructure.

After it annexed Crimea in 2014, Russian authorities created two new internet cables running along the Kerch Strait, where they connect with Russia. This process took three years to complete—something Ermoshina calls a “soft substitution model,” with connections transferring slowly over time. Since then, Russia has developed more advanced internet control systems. “The power of the Russian censorship machine changed in between [2014 and 2022],” Ermoshina says. “What I'm afraid of is the strength of Russian propaganda.”

It's likely that rerouting the internet in Kherson and the surrounding areas is seen by Russian authorities as a key step in trying to legitimize the occupation, says Olena Lennon, a Ukrainian political science and national security adjunct professor at the University of New Haven. The moves could also be a blueprint for future conflicts.

Alongside internet rerouting in Kherson and other regions, Russian officials have started handing out Russian [passports](#). Officials [claim](#) a Russian bank will soon open in Kherson. And the region has been moved to [Moscow's time zone](#) by occupying forces. Many of the steps echo what previously happened in Crimea, Donetsk, and Luhansk. “Russia is making it clear that they're there for a long haul,” Lennon says, and controlling the internet is core to that. “They're making plans for a long-term occupation.”

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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	06/16 How American woman helped train ISIS
SOURCE	https://www.19fortyfive.com/2022/06/isis-american-allison-fluke-ekren/
GIST	<p>A U.S. citizen has pleaded guilty to charges that she aided the so-called Islamic State, or ISIS. Last week, Allison Fluke-Ekren admitted that she provided military training to more than 100 women and young girls who served in an ISIS all-female battalion.</p> <p>An American Terrorist</p> <p>The U.S. Department of Justice charged Fluke-Ekren with organizing, leading, and directing the would-be fighters on behalf of ISIS. Designated as a foreign terrorist organization, ISIS terrorized parts of Syria and Iraq from 2014 to 2020.</p> <p>The 42-year-old Fluke-Ekren used to reside in Kansas. She started traveling overseas around September 2008 when she moved to Egypt with her former husband, who was also a member of ISIS and was killed.</p> <p>In September 2011, Fluke-Ekren moved to Benghazi, Libya, and started engaging in terrorist activities. After the al Qaeda attack on the U.S. diplomatic mission in that city, Fluke-Ekren visited the destroyed compounds and stole at least one box containing classified documents. She then moved to Syria and Iraq, where she directly supported ISIS.</p> <p>Her activities were not limited to providing military training and support to ISIS. Fluke-Ekren was considering a terrorist attack on U.S. soil. The U.S. Department of Justice described her activities and motivations in a press release:</p> <p>“While residing in Syria, Fluke-Ekren told a witness about her desire to conduct an attack in the United States. To conduct the attack, Fluke-Ekren explained that she could go to a shopping mall in the United States, park a vehicle full of explosives in the basement or parking garage level of the structure, and detonate the explosives in the vehicle with a cell phone triggering device. Fluke-Ekren also spoke about learning how to make bombs and explosives. Fluke-Ekren further said that she considered any attack that did not kill a large number of individuals to be a waste of resources. Fluke-Ekren would hear about</p>

external attacks taking place in countries outside the United States and would comment that she wished the attack had occurred on U.S. soil instead,”

All told, the Justice Department concludes that the American woman engaged in terrorism-related activities across the Levant, Middle East, and North Africa from September 2011 until May 2019. Some of the countries where Fluke-Ekren carried out these acts include Syria, Libya, and Iraq.

An ISIS Battalion Commander

The unit Fluke-Ekren led was known as the *Khatiba Nusaybah*. She trained the women in small unit tactics and marksmanship, including how to operate and maintain AK-47 rifles, grenades, and even suicide belts. Some of the girls that received military training from Fluke-Ekren were as young as 10 years old.

“In addition, witnesses with first-hand knowledge stated that the *Khatiba Nusaybah* also provided certain members with instruction on physical training including martial arts, medical training, VBIED [vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices] driving courses, ISIS religious classes, and how to pack and prep a ‘go bag’ with rifles and other military supplies,” the Justice Department added.

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HEADLINE	06/16 Philippines: 11 insurgents as terrorists
SOURCE	https://wtop.com/asia/2022/06/philippine-officials-designate-11-insurgents-terrorists/
GIST	<p>MANILA, Philippines (AP) — The Philippine government has designated a former peace negotiator and five other suspected communist rebel leaders as “terrorists” in a move that allowed the freezing of their financial assets, which officials said could be used to finance attacks.</p> <p>The Anti-Terrorism Council separately designated as terrorists five commanders of the Abu Sayyaf, a small but violent Muslim militant group in the country’s south. They have been linked to the Islamic State group in an announcement made public Wednesday.</p> <p>Long-running communist and Muslim insurgencies are among key security problems President-elect Ferdinand Marcos Jr. stands to inherit when he takes office on June 30. Although considerably weakened by decades of offensives, infighting and factionalism, the communist and Muslim insurgents remain national security threats.</p> <p>The six rebel leaders accused of membership in the Communist Party of the Philippines, its armed wing the New People’s Army and related organizations were led by Luis Jalandoni, a former Roman Catholic priest who joined the communist rebellion, one of the longest-raging in Asia.</p> <p>He gained national prominence as the chief rebel negotiator for decades in peace talks with the Philippine government brokered by Norway until he retired years ago. His whereabouts are unknown.</p> <p>The Anti-Terrorism Council said Jalandoni and the five other high-ranking communist rebels were designated terrorists under Philippine law due to their alleged involvement in the rebel movement and past and future acts of terrorism. It did not elaborate or cite any evidence.</p> <p>The rebels condemned the government’s terrorist labeling of the 87-year-old Jalando and the others as a “gross perversion of the truth.”</p> <p>“It was made without basis and cites no specific judicable facts. It aims to slander them and restrict their democratic rights,” the Communist Party of the Philippines said in a statement.</p> <p>The Anti-Terrorism Council also did not cite specific evidence against the five Abu Sayyaf commanders. But a military counterterrorism officer said Thursday on condition of anonymity that they were based in the southern provinces of Sulu and Basilan and linked to ransom kidnappings and other terrorist attacks.</p>

	<p>The government has previously designated the Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People's Army along with the Abu Sayyaf as terrorist organizations.</p> <p>Outgoing President Rodrigo Duterte took steps early in his presidency to foster peace talks with communist guerrillas, who the military estimates at 2,700 fighters. But both sides accused the other of pressing on with attacks and the negotiations eventually collapsed.</p> <p>The Philippine government has never initiated any talks with the Abu Sayyaf, which has carved a brutal image for deadly bombings and beheadings, but has encouraged many of its fighters to surrender. The military has pressed on with decades-long offensives against the militants, who are estimated to number less than 200 mostly in predominantly Muslim Sulu province and outlying islands.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Al-Shabaab, IS networks on Facebook
SOURCE	https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20220615-alshabaab-and-the-islamic-state-networks-on-facebook
GIST	<p>Researchers at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) led a two-year investigation into the online media ecosystem of al-Shabaab and the Islamic State in Africa, analyzing the role of “independent news” outlets and their intersections with hundreds-strong networks of amplifier profiles on Facebook linked to a number of central pages identifying themselves as “media outlets” or “media personalities” operating in Somali, Kiswahili and Arabic. Researchers found that the network of support for al-Shabaab and Islamic State extended across several platforms, including decentralized messaging applications such as Element and RocketChat, and encrypted messaging platforms such as Telegram, as well as Twitter, YouTube and Facebook.</p> <p>A qualitative cross-platform analysis showed the most active, networked, and multilingual ecosystem of support for al-Shabaab and the Islamic State existed on Facebook, where profiles and pages classified as “media outlets” were sharing terrorist content openly and eschewing private groups and profiles. The content that ISD researchers observed through the networks is often linked to “media” and “media personality” pages in Somali, Kiswahili and Arabic, and not only violates the platform’s community guidelines, but also points to language moderation blind spots that have been previously documented by journalists as well as whistleblowers</p> <p>Here is the report’s Executive Summary:</p> <p>Executive Summary</p> <p>The ecosystem of support for Harakaat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen (al-Shabaab) and the Islamic State in Africa runs across the open web, encrypted messaging applications, niche platforms, and straight through Facebook, unbothered by moderation in languages that have long proved problematic for the platform (Image 1). While much of the research focus on terrorist attacks in Africa has been on the operational capabilities of al-Shabaab to strike in East Africa¹, and the Islamic State’s rise across the African continent,² there remains a dearth of research into the al-Shabaab and Islamic State digital propaganda machinery and their Africa-focused narratives.</p> <p>Researchers at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) led a two-year investigation³ into the online media ecosystem of al-Shabaab and the Islamic State, analyzing the role of “independent news” outlets and their intersections with hundreds-strong networks of amplifier profiles on Facebook linked to a number of central pages identifying themselves as “media outlets” or “media personalities” operating in Somali, Kiswahili and Arabic. Researchers found that the network of support for al-Shabaab and Islamic State extended across several platforms, including decentralized messaging applications such as Element and RocketChat, and encrypted messaging platforms such as Telegram, as well as Twitter, YouTube⁴ and Facebook.</p> <p>A qualitative cross-platform analysis showed the most active, networked, and multilingual ecosystem of support for al-Shabaab and the Islamic State existed on Facebook, where profiles and pages classified as</p>

“media outlets” were sharing terrorist content openly, and eschewing private groups and profiles. The content that ISD researchers observed through the networks is often linked to “media” and “media personality” pages in Somali, Kiswahili and Arabic, and not only violates the platform’s community guidelines, but also points to language moderation blind spots that have been previously documented by journalists as well as whistleblowers.

These language gaps continue to fluster Facebook moderation⁵, despite the company’s increased investment in moderation⁶. In October of last year, internal Facebook documents released to the public for the first time indicated the platform lagged behind in its ability to effectively moderate languages in “at-risk” countries such as Iraq, Ethiopia, India and Pakistan⁷. In Afghanistan for instance, Facebook researchers claimed finding accurate translations of Pashto and Dari undercut effective moderation. Arabic, and its regional variations and dialects, was of similar concern to Facebook. ISD research has previously shown just how Arabic conspiracies⁸ and terror content⁹ flummoxed moderators¹⁰ and moderation efforts. Facebook has attempted to step moderation of Arabic, based on both the revelations and indications from the internal documents released to improve those efforts in a number of languages.

Yet, even with the increased scrutiny on the platform’s moderation efforts in languages outside of English¹¹, what ISD research indicates is that language moderation gaps not only play into the hands of governments conducting human rights abuses¹² or spreading hate speech¹³, but are similarly resulting in brazenly open displays of support for terror groups such as al-Shabaab and the Islamic State (Image 3). Emblematic of this issue, researchers found a Somali-language “media outlet” shared four official al-Shabaab videos through its public page during a three-week stretch of October 2021, collectively garnering 53,300 views, and 17,800 shares. These videos carried al-Shabaab’s official media outlet branding and were in no shape or form disguised to get past moderators, and yet managed to stay on the platform for months. This report is an attempt to understand gaps in moderation and the tactics to evade moderation dynamic, and the networks of terror supporting profiles and pages that sit at the core of the issue.

Furthermore, ISD investigation revealed a highly coordinated online propaganda machinery that relies on the surface web as much as it does on a network of Somali, Kiswahili and Arabic language Facebook profiles and pages to spread key narratives such as al-Shabaab and the Islamic State being an anti-imperial and anti-colonial force protecting the interests of Muslims in Somalia, Ethiopia, Uganda, and notably, Kenya. Central to these narratives is a foundational set of tropes that relies on calling out the illegitimacy of the governments currently in power across East Africa, while championing taking up arms to fight their “democracy” and their “elections”. It is also important to note that xenophobia toward Somali communities¹⁴ in Kenya has long been rife,¹⁵ leading to the demonization, securitization, and disenfranchisement of Somali refugees and Somali-Kenyan Muslims.

While some of the research¹⁶ into Kenya and al-Shabaab and Islamic State support online has rightly focused on Kiswahili and English-speaking networks, understanding the reach and key narratives of Somali, Kiswahili and Arabic language networks, creates a more complete picture of al-Shabaab and Islamic State propaganda and recruitment efforts to date. It is also important to note that xenophobia toward Somali communities¹⁷ in Kenya has long been rife¹⁸, leading to the demonization, securitization, and disenfranchisement of Somali refugees and Somali-Kenyan Muslims.

Well aware of these issues, ISD researchers note while Somali-language profiles and pages were the most visible bases of al-Shabaab support, Kiswahili and Arabic language accounts also played important roles as central promoters of both al-Shabaab and Islamic State narratives and content. Many of the high profile accounts supportive of the Islamic State in East Africa found during this investigation used Kiswahili to promote official narratives from the group. The largest public group of supporters of both al-Shabaab and the Islamic State in East Africa was a Swahili-language group dedicated to a noted extremist preacher from Mombasa, Kenya¹⁹. The group used a photo of Sheik Aboud Rogo, who helped al-Shabaab fund operations and recruit was killed in 2012, and functioned as a central locus point for sharing al-Shabaab and the Islamic State propaganda.

The findings from the investigation point to key gaps in understanding al-Shabaab and Islamic State networks on Facebook and clear moderation gaps on the platform. These gaps play directly into the hands of al-Shabaab and Islamic State supporters and outlets. The most clear example of this was following the attack on the DusitD2 Complex in Nairobi in January 2019, which resulted in 22 people and 5 attackers being killed. A Kenyan government investigation into its planning revealed it was coordinated on Facebook through an account that was “undetected for six months until after the attack.”²⁰ This investigation has also highlighted the need for Kenyan authorities, both at the national and local levels, as well as civil society, to revisit their understanding of the narratives used to promote, and potentially radicalize, Kenyans into the ranks of al-Shabaab and the Islamic State. Ultimately, al-Shabaab and Islamic State supporters are capitalizing on ineffective moderation in East African languages to build out stronger and more resilient networks to polarize audiences and pollute the information landscape with extremist disinformation.

The findings presented are meant to provide a more holistic understanding of the al-Shabaab and Islamic State presence on the open web and popular social media platforms such as Facebook. The report highlights the existence of a continually-evolving ecosystem of al-Shabaab and Islamic State supporters promoting multilingual narratives focused on the African continent as well as its governments and civil society. These ecosystems seek to sow distrust in democracy and democratic practices by honing in on government-linked rights abuses, presenting both al-Shabaab and the Islamic State as popular alternatives to the status quo.

As another contentious election season looms in Kenya, and a history of widespread election violence hangs over the upcoming poll. The most active al-Shabaab and Islamic State supportive profiles analyzed for this report were found to be sowing discord ahead of the election by calling for violence and the establishment of an East African caliphate.

These dual, and dueling, ecosystems of extremism are alive and well, adapting to an online environment where there seems to be less effective moderation than in other contexts, and ultimately, exploiting the open web and Facebook for its ability to spread old and new content to regional audiences. While extremists are taking advantage of this fractured and polarized landscape, ‘gaming’ the system to increase the chances of radicalization and recruitment online, they are also unencumbered by the lack of effective moderation in the languages of the region.

1. Caleb Weiss and Andrew Tobin. “Shabaab kills dozens in twin suicide bombings targeting Somalia’s election process.” Long War Journal. March 24, 2022.

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HEADLINE	06/15 Israel: Gaza aid worker funded terrorism
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/15/israeli-court-finds-gaza-aid-worker-guilty-of-financing-terrorism
GIST	An Israeli court has handed a guilty verdict to a Gaza aid worker accused of funnelling relief money to Hamas, despite international outcry at the lack of evidence in the high-profile case that has dragged on for years.

[Mohammad El Halabi](#), the former head of the US-based charity World Vision's Gaza office, was arrested in 2016 after being accused by Israel's Shin Bet security service of transferring tens of millions of dollars to Hamas, the Palestinian militant group in control inside the Gaza Strip. He has been held in pre-trial detention since.

Both he and World Vision have denied any wrongdoing. On Wednesday – more than 160 court sessions and six years later – the district court in the southern Israeli city of Beersheba found Halabi guilty on all but one of the terrorism charges against him, including membership of a terrorist organisation, financing terrorist activities, having “transmitted information to the enemy”, and possession of a weapon.

Sentencing is expected in the next few weeks. World Vision said Halabi would appeal against the ruling.

After Halabi's arrest, his employer, independent auditors and the Australian government, a major World Vision donor, found [no evidence of wrongdoing or diversion of funds](#).

The charity said the alleged diversion of \$50m [£41m] greatly outstripped its [Gaza](#) operating budget for the previous decade, which totalled \$22.5m [£19m]. The independent forensic audit conducted by international accounting firm Deloitte and DLA Piper, a global law firm, found that rather than aid Hamas, Halabi had actively worked to prevent funds from falling into the Islamist group's hands.

Much of the evidence against Halabi has been kept secret over the years, owing to “security concerns” cited by Israeli prosecutors. UN human rights experts, diplomats and NGOs had repeatedly called on Israel to grant Halabi immediate access to a fair trial or release him.

The day before the verdict, the UN's Human Rights Office expressed “serious concerns” over the proceedings, in particular regarding the “lack of evidence”.

Sharon Marshall, a spokesperson for World Vision who has closely followed the case, said in a statement after the ruling: “In our view, there have been irregularities in the trial process” and that the verdict was based on “a lack of substantive and publicly available evidence”.

“We support Mohammad's intent to appeal the decision and call for a fair and transparent appeal process based on the facts of the case,” she said.

Halabi's lawyer, Maher Hanna, called the judgment “totally political”, saying it had “nothing to do with the facts”.

The court's decision did not describe the diversion of any financial aid to Hamas, but rejected the charity's argument that it had firm controls in place that would have prevented it.

It also referred to a supposed confession by Halabi that has not been made public. Hanna has said that the confession was based on notes made by an investigator, who talked to another prisoner who heard it, and should not have been admitted as evidence as it was given under duress.

According to prisoners' rights group Addameer, “many Palestinian detainees plead guilty for offences they did not commit and waive their right to continue with judicial procedures”, often because of a lack of faith in the Israeli civil and military court systems to deliver fair and timely verdicts.

With World Vision's legal backing, however, Halabi has been able to take what his father, Khalil, has described as a “principled stand”, refusing to admit to crimes he says he did not commit and avoiding further damage to World Vision's reputation.

The charity suspended its Gaza operations after Halabi's arrest, shutting down psychosocial support for 40,000 children, as well as provision of medical supplies and food relief.

	<p>The 15-year-old Israeli-Egyptian blockade of the Gaza Strip has severely curtailed freedom of movement for the enclave's 2 million residents, and left them struggling with a collapsed health care system, rolling electricity blackouts and very little clean water.</p> <p>Israel says it supports the work of aid organisations but is forced to take action to prevent donor funds from falling into the hands of armed groups like Hamas that do not recognise its existence and attack its citizens.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 GAO: no full probe US role Yemen abuses
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jun/15/us-yemen-human-rights-abuses-gao-watchdog
GIST	<p>The US government has not fully investigated its own role in perpetuating human rights abuses in Yemen, according to a congressional watchdog report that offered a damning assessment of both the Trump and Biden administrations' commitment to tracking violations of humanitarian law.</p> <p>A report by the Government Accountability Office, which examined US weapons sales to the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen, also raised serious doubts about one of Joe Biden's first foreign policy as president, when he announced that his administration was ending US support for Saudi offensive operations in Yemen.</p> <p>At the time, in February 2021, the move was seen as an attempt to show the world that the US would no longer be an unquestioning ally to its allies in the Gulf.</p> <p>But the GAO found that the Biden administration's move to classify weapons as offensive or defensive was largely meaningless. When asked by the GAO how they had distinguished between equipment used for defensive purposes and offensive purposes, state department officials "could not provide a definition for equipment that is defensive in nature".</p> <p>The GAO report added: "State officials said they consider the threats posed to Saudi Arabia's borders and infrastructure when deciding which weapons are 'offensive' and which are 'defensive'."</p> <p>A spokesperson for the White House national security council did not immediately return a request for comment.</p> <p>The report's examination of nearly \$60bn in US weapons sales to the Saudi-led coalition – from a period spanning 2015 to 2021 – is the second time a watchdog has attempted to investigate the US's own culpability in contributing to violation of humanitarian laws in the Yemen conflict. In August 2020, a state department inspector general found that the department was failing to take measures to reduce civilian deaths.</p> <p>The GAO found that both the state department and the Department of Defense had made "some efforts" to understand civilian harm and the use of US-origin weapons in Yemen. But it also found no evidence that the state department had ever investigated any allegations that US equipment transferred to Saudi Arabia and the UAE had ever been used for unauthorised purposes or against anything other than "legitimate targets".</p> <p>The troubling findings come days after the White House confirmed that Biden will visit Riyadh next month, in what is widely seen as an effort to persuade the kingdom to increase oil output and ease price pressure for consumers.</p> <p>Human rights advocates who have supported Biden's decision – so far – to try to personally alienate Saudi's de facto leader, Mohammed bin Salman, have called the visit a "betrayal" of Biden campaign promise to turn Saudi into a pariah.</p>

	<p>The UN has called the Saudi-led war in Yemen one of the world’s worst humanitarian crises, affecting an estimated 21 million people.</p> <p>The GAO reported that the US DoD had made some efforts to train Saudi officials to mitigate civilian casualties and adhere to international humanitarian law. But the DoD has never “fully measured” the extent to which its advising and training has helped to facilitate “civilian harm reduction” in Yemen.</p> <p>The GAO also said that it had been told by the state department that officials there could not locate three so-called “country team” assessments to the UAE, which would have included critical information and how the US has evaluated weapons sales requests. The report said that, according to DoD policy, the assessments must also include the “potential for misuse of the defense articles in question” and what “additional training or support, if any, is necessary to reduce the risk that the recipient will inadvertently cause civilian harm during operations”.</p> <p>GAO requested the assessments in September and were told this month that they have been located and would be provided to GAO once clearance was obtained.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 US-led coalition captures senior IS leader
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/senior-leader-captured-us-led-military-raid-syria-85430617
GIST	<p>BEIRUT -- U.S.-led coalition forces captured a senior Islamic State leader in a military operation in northern Syria on Thursday, the coalition said.</p> <p>In a statement, it said the captured leader was an experienced bomb maker and operational facilitator, describing him as one of the top leaders of the extremist group’s Syria branch.</p> <p>The statement did not identify the individual nor say where the raid took place. It said the operation was “successful” with no civilians harmed nor any injuries to coalition forces.</p> <p>A Syria war monitor, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, said the operation began with two helicopters landing near the targeted area in the village of al-Humaira, about 4 kilometers (2.5 miles) from the Turkish border.</p> <p>It reported clashes unknown gunmen hiding in houses in the village in the northern Aleppo countryside, as they were chased by members of the coalition. The Observatory is Britain-based and maintains a network of activists on the ground in Syria.</p> <p>The U.S.-backed forces declared victory over the Islamic State in March 2019 after retaking the last piece of territory held by the group in Syria. But IS continues to operate and carry out deadly attacks in both Iraq and Syria through sleeper cells and maintains several affiliates in various countries.</p> <p>The coalition has conducted raids in the past to take out leaders of the violent group. In February, the group’s leader Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi blew himself up along with members of his family as American forces raided his Syria hideout.</p> <p>His predecessor, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, died similarly along with his family in 2019 by detonating a suicide vest in a tunnel in northwest Syria as a military operation unfolded during the Trump administration.</p> <p>The IS group at the height of its power controlled more than 40,000 square miles stretching from Syria to Iraq and ruled over 8 million people. Its attacks in the region included a major assault last month to seize a prison in northeast Syria holding at least 3,000 IS detainees.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 DOJ: US faces ‘complex’ threat landscape
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SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/encrypted-planning-high-power-firearms-make-extremist-threat/story?id=85422358
GIST	<p>The United States is facing the most "complex" threat landscape in quite some time, a top Justice Department official told a conference in Washington, D.C., Wednesday.</p> <p>Lone-wolf actors, and their access to high-capacity firearms -- like what allegedly occurred in Buffalo, New York -- are very difficult for law enforcement to combat, Assistant Attorney General for the National Security Division Matthew Olsen told attendees at the George Washington University Program on Extremism symposium.</p> <p>Attorney General Merrick Garland announced hate crime charges Wednesday morning against the alleged shooter accused of storming a Tops grocery store on May 14 and gunning down 10 people, all of whom were Black.</p> <p>"Once these individuals decide to carry out an act of violence, once they've moved on that path from being radicalized to being mobilized to violence, they pose significant challenges to law enforcement," Olsen said.</p> <p>Encrypted planning communications and access to high-capacity firearms are two of the most pertinent issues that work against law enforcement, he said.</p> <p>"There are fewer opportunities for us to detect and disrupt their plots before they happen," Olsen explained. "The ability to gain access to military-grade weapons makes the job of law enforcement very hard when it comes to violent extremists."</p> <p>The threat of domestic violent extremists is not new: the Biden administration has focused on combatting DVEs by establishing a unit at the DOJ and providing grant money through the Department of Homeland Security.</p> <p>The assistant attorney general said it is "beyond dispute" that the ability to get military-grade weapons gives DVEs the ability to "carry out attacks on a scale that they couldn't otherwise carry out and that we don't see in other countries."</p> <p>Olsen said his newly established domestic violent extremist unit at the Justice Department, which he announced in January and was stood up a month ago, will not only be prosecuting domestic violent extremist cases, but also training others in identifying DVEs.</p> <p>"This unit can be a critical safeguard because domestic terrorism cases raise issues about First Amendment and some difficult legal judgements and policy judgements," Olsen said.</p> <p>Olsen said attorneys have come in from around the country to work on the unit.</p> <p>He said the DOJ is well-versed in prosecuting extremist cases given their experience in fighting the war on terror.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Child soldiering continues in Yemen
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/yemen-child-soldiering-continues-houthi-promise-85430615
GIST	<p>CAIRO -- In the video, a man stands in front of a blackboard in a full classroom, teaching the parts of an AK-47 rifle. He then hands it over to a boy, showing him how to cock it.</p> <p>Other children crowd around, many who appear to be no older than 10, asking for their turn. The video, leaked online this month, provides a rare window into child soldier indoctrination by Yemen's Houthi rebels. Local residents confirmed to The Associated Press that it was filmed in recent weeks in Yemen's rebel-held province of Amran, northwest of the capital, Sanaa.</p>

Despite an agreement with the U.N. in April to halt the practice, the Houthis continue to recruit children into the military ranks to fight in the country's grinding civil war, Houthi officials, aid workers and residents told the AP.

Two Houthi officials said the rebels recruited several hundred children including as young as 10 over the past two months. Those children have been deployed to front lines, as part of a buildup of forces taking place during a U.N.-brokered truce, which has held for more than two months, one official said.

The officials, both hardliners within the Houthi movement, said they see nothing wrong with the practice, arguing that boys from 10 or 12 are considered men.

"Those are not children. They are true men, who should defend their nation against the Saudi, American aggression, and defend the Islamic nation," one of them said. The two spoke on condition of anonymity to avoid frictions with others among the Houthis.

The Houthis have used what they call "summer camps" to disseminate their religious ideology and to recruit boys to fight. Such camps take place in schools and mosques around the Houthi-held part of Yemen, which encompasses the north and center of the country and Sanaa.

Yemen's conflict erupted in 2014 when the Houthis descended from their northern enclave and took over Sanaa, forcing the internationally recognized government to flee to the south. A Saudi-led coalition entered the war in early 2015 to try to restore the government to power, waging a destructive air campaign and arming anti-Houthi forces.

The war has killed more than 150,000 people, including more than 14,500 civilians and has plunged the country into near famine, creating one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

Child soldiers have been involved for years. Nearly 2,000 Houthi-recruited children were killed on the battlefield between January 2020 and May 2021, according to U.N. experts. Pro-government forces have also used child fighters but to a much lesser degree and have taken greater measures to halt the practice, according to U.N. and aid officials.

Overall, the U.N. says over 10,200 children have been killed or maimed in the war, though it is unclear how many may have been combatants.

In April, the rebels signed what the U.N. children's agency described as an "action plan" to end and prevent the practice. U.N. spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said the rebels committed to identifying children in their ranks and releasing them within six months.

UNICEF and the Houthis did not respond to requests for comment on the continued recruitment since.

Four aid workers with three international organizations operating in rebel-held areas said they observed intensified Houthi efforts to recruit children in recent weeks. The Houthis' ranks have been thinned because of battlefield losses, especially during a nearly two-year battle for the crucial city of Marib.

The aid workers spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of their safety and that their groups could be barred from working in Houthi-held territory.

They said the rebels have pressured families to send their children to camps where they learn how to handle weapons and plant mines, in return for services including food rations from international organizations.

One aid worker who operates in remote northern areas described watching children as young as 10 manning checkpoints along the road, with AK-47s hanging on their shoulders. Others are sent to the front line. He said children have returned wounded from fighting at Marib.

Thousands of fighters were killed in the battle for government-held Marib. The Houthis' long attempt to capture it was finally stopped in late 2021 when government forces were bolstered by better-equipped fighters backed by the United Arab Emirates.

Abdel-Bari Taher, a Yemeni commentator and former head of the country's Journalists' Union, said that the Houthis are exploiting local customs to the children's and society's detriment. Having or carrying a weapon is a tradition deeply rooted in Yemen, especially in rural and mountainous communities, he said.

"It is a source of pride and kind of manhood for the boys," he said.

The Houthis also condition crucial food aid on children attending the training camps, some say.

Two residents in Amran province said Houthi representatives came to their homes in May and told them to prepare their children for camps at the end of the school year. The residents, who are farmers, spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals.

They said their five children, aged between 11 and 16, were taken in late May to the school where the video was taken. One father said he was told that if he didn't send his children, his family would no longer receive food rations.

The U.N. panel of experts said earlier this year that the Houthis, a Zaidi-Shiite religious movement turned-rebel militia with ties with Iran, have a system to indoctrinate child soldiers, including using humanitarian aid to pressure families.

Children are taken first to centers for a month or more of religious courses. There, they are told they are joining a holy war against Jews and Christians and Arab countries that have succumbed to Western influence. Seven-year-olds are taught weapons cleaning and how to dodge rockets, the experts found.

The Houthis have in the past officially denied enlisting children to fight.

But they have also provided evidence to the contrary. A high-ranking Houthi, Mohammed al-Bukhaiti, posted a video in early June from a visit he paid to one of the camps in Dhamar province. It shows dozens of children in uniforms standing in a military-like formation and declaring allegiance to rebel movement's top leader, Abdul-Malek al-Houthi.

"Soldiers of God," they shout. "We are coming."

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HEADLINE	06/15 France captures senior IS figure in Mali
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/france-announces-capture-senior-islamic-state-figure-mali-2022-06-15/
GIST	<p>PARIS, June 15 (Reuters) - France announced on Wednesday that soldiers from its operation battling Islamist militants in the Sahel region of West Africa had captured Oumeya Ould Albakaye, a senior Islamic State figure in Mali.</p> <p>The French Armed Forces ministry said Albakaye was captured by Operation Barkhane forces between the night of June 11 and the early hours of June 12 close to the border between Mali and Niger.</p> <p>Souring relations between France and the military junta in its former colony of Mali have led France to withdraw troops that were deployed in 2013 to push back militants linked to al Qaeda, and later to Islamic State.</p> <p>Mali has been hit by violence since 2012 when jihadists took over the north. France beat them back, but by 2015 they had regrouped and unleashed a wave of attacks in the centre. They have since spread into Niger and Burkina Faso, raising concerns about regional instability.</p>

Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	06/15 Data: extraordinary global heating in Arctic
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/jun/15/new-data-reveals-extraordinary-global-heating-in-the-arctic
GIST	<p>New data has revealed extraordinary rates of global heating in the Arctic, up to seven times faster than the global average.</p> <p>The heating is occurring in the North Barents Sea, a region where fast rising temperatures are suspected to trigger increases in extreme weather in North America, Europe and Asia. The researchers said the heating in this region was an “early warning” of what could happen across the rest of the Arctic.</p> <p>The new figures show annual average temperatures in the area are rising across the year by up to 2.7C a decade, with particularly high rises in the months of autumn of up to 4C a decade. This makes the North Barents Sea and its islands the fastest warming place known on Earth.</p> <p>Recent years have seen temperatures far above average recorded in the Arctic, with seasoned observers describing the situation as “crazy”, “weird”, and “simply shocking”. Some climate scientists have warned the unprecedented events could signal faster and more abrupt climate breakdown.</p> <p>It was already known that the climate crisis was driving heating across the Arctic three times faster than the global average, but the new research shows the situation is even more extreme in places.</p> <p>Sea ice is good at reflecting sunlight but is melting away. This allows the darker ocean below to absorb more energy. Losing sea ice also means it no longer restricts the ability of warmer sea waters to heat up the Arctic air. The more ice is lost, the more heat accumulates, forming a feedback loop.</p> <p>“We expected to see strong warming, but not on the scale we found,” said Ketil Isaksen, senior researched at the Norwegian Meteorological Institute and who led the work. “We were all surprised. From what we know from all other observation points on the globe, these are the highest warming rates we have observed so far.”</p> <p>“The broader message is that the feedback of melting sea ice is even higher than previously shown,” he said. “This is an early warning for what’s happening in the rest of the Arctic if this melting continues, and what is most likely to happen in the next decades.” The world’s scientists said in April that immediate and deep cuts to carbon emissions and other greenhouse gases are needed to tackle the climate emergency.</p> <p>“This study shows that even the best possible models have been underestimating the rate of warming in the Barents Sea,” said Dr Ruth Mottram, climate scientist at the Danish Meteorological Institute, and not part of the team. “We seem to be seeing it shifting to a new regime, as it becomes less like the Arctic and more like the North Atlantic. It’s really on the edge right now and it seems unlikely that sea ice will persist in this region for much longer.”</p> <p>The research, published in the journal Scientific Reports, is based on data from automatic weather stations on the islands of Svalbard and Franz Josef Land. Until now, this had not been through the standard quality control process and made public.</p> <p>The result was a high-quality set of surface air temperature measurements from 1981 to 2020. The researchers concluded: “The regional warming rate for the Northern Barents Sea region is exceptional and corresponds to 2 to 2.5 times the Arctic warming averages and 5 to 7 times the global warming averages.”</p>

	<p>There was a very strong correlation over time between air temperature, sea ice loss and ocean temperature. Isaksen said the rapid temperature rise would have a very big impact on ecosystems: “For instance, here in Oslo, we have a temperature rise of 0.4C a decade and people really feel the disappearing snow conditions during winter. But what’s happening in the far north is off the scale.”</p> <p>Isaksen said the new information on heating rates in the area would help research by other scientists on how changes in the Arctic affect extreme weather in populous areas at lower latitudes. There is evidence that the rapid heating changes the jet stream winds that encircle the pole and influence extreme weather.</p> <p>“Sea ice loss and warming in the Barents Sea in particular have been isolated in previous work as being especially relevant to changes in winter-time atmospheric circulation that are tied to extreme winter weather events,” said Prof Michael Mann, from Pennsylvania State University, US. “If this mechanism is valid, and there’s some debate over that, then this is yet another way climate change could be increasing certain types of extreme weather events [and which] isn’t well captured by current models.”</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 EPA: ‘forever chemicals’ risk at low levels
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/epa-forever-chemicals-pose-risk-even-at-very-low-levels/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — The Environmental Protection Agency is warning that two nonstick and stain-resistant compounds found in drinking water are more dangerous than previously thought and pose health risks even at levels so low they cannot currently be detected.</p> <p>The two compounds, known as PFOA and PFOS, have been voluntarily phased out by U.S. manufacturers, but there are a limited number of ongoing uses and the chemicals remain in the environment because they do not degrade over time. The compounds are part of a larger cluster of “forever chemicals” known as PFAS that have been used in consumer products and industry since the 1940s.</p> <p>The EPA on Wednesday issued nonbinding health advisories that set health risk thresholds for PFOA and PFOS to near zero, replacing 2016 guidelines that had set them at 70 parts per trillion. The chemicals are found in products including cardboard packaging, carpets and firefighting foam.</p> <p>At the same time, the agency is inviting states and territories to apply for \$1 billion under the new bipartisan infrastructure law to address PFAS and other contaminants in drinking water. Money can be used for technical assistance, water quality testing, contractor training and installation of centralized treatment, officials said.</p> <p>Several states have set their own drinking water limits to address PFAS contamination that are far tougher than the federal guidance. The toxic industrial compounds are associated with serious health conditions, including cancer and reduced birth weight.</p> <p>“People on the front-lines of PFAS contamination have suffered for far too long,” EPA Administrator Michael Regan said in a statement. “That’s why EPA is taking aggressive action as part of a whole-of-government approach to prevent these chemicals from entering the environment and to help protect concerned families from this pervasive challenge.”</p> <p>Radhika Fox, EPA’s assistant administrator for water, announced the actions at a national PFAS Conference in Wilmington, North Carolina, where PFAS contamination was discovered in the Cape Fear River watershed.</p> <p>PFAS is short for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, which are used in nonstick frying pans, water-repellent sports gear, stain-resistant rugs, cosmetics and countless other consumer products. The chemical bonds are so strong that they do not degrade or do so only slowly in the environment and remain in a person’s bloodstream indefinitely.</p>

The revised health guidelines are based on new science and consider lifetime exposure to the chemicals, the EPA said. Officials are no longer confident that PFAS levels allowed under the 2016 guidelines “do not have adverse health impacts,” an EPA spokesman said.

While the new guidelines set acceptable risk below levels that can currently be measured, as a practical matter the EPA recommends that utilities take action against the chemicals when they reach levels that can be measured — currently about four parts per trillion, a senior administration official told reporters Tuesday night.

The EPA said it expects to propose national drinking water regulations for PFOA and PFOS later this year, with a final rule expected in 2023.

In a related development, the EPA said that for the first time it is issuing final health advisories for two chemicals that are considered replacements for PFOA and PFOS. One group is known as GenX chemicals, while the other is known as PFBS. Health advisories for GenX chemicals were set at 10 parts per trillion, while PFBS was set at 2,000 parts per trillion.

The agency said the advisories provide technical information that federal, state and local agencies can use to address PFAS in drinking water, including water quality monitoring, use of filters and other technologies that reduce PFAS, and strategies to reduce exposure to the substances.

Environmental and public health groups hailed the announcement as a good first step. Advocates have long urged action on PFAS after thousands of communities detected PFAS chemicals in their water. PFAS chemicals have been confirmed at nearly 400 military installations and at least 200 million people in the United States are drinking water contaminated with PFAS, according to the Environmental Working Group, a research and advocacy organization.

“EPA had the courage to follow the science. This is a step in the right direction,” said Stel Bailey, co-facilitator of the National PFAS Contamination Coalition.

Erik Olson, senior strategic director for health and food at the Natural Resources Defense Council, said “the science is clear: These chemicals are shockingly toxic at extremely low doses.” He called on the EPA to regulate all PFAS chemicals “with enforceable standards as a single class of chemicals.”

Melanie Benesh, legislative attorney for the Environmental Working Group, said EPA’s announcement “should set off alarm bells for consumers and regulators” alike.

The American Chemistry Council, which represents major chemical companies, said EPA’s announcement “reflects a failure of the agency to follow its accepted practice for ensuring the scientific integrity of its process.”

While the advisories are nonbinding, “they will have sweeping implications for policies at the state and federal levels,” the group said. “These new levels cannot be achieved with existing treatment technology and, in fact, are below levels that can be reliably detected using existing EPA methods.”

The Chemours Co., a DuPont spinoff that uses GenX chemicals to produce fluoropolymers used in semiconductors, mobile phones, hospital ventilators and other products, called the EPA’s announcement “fundamentally flawed.” It said the agency “disregarded relevant data and issued a health advisory contrary to the agency’s own standards and this administration’s commitment to scientific integrity.”

The company said it is evaluating next steps, “including potential legal action, to address the EPA’s scientifically unsound action.”

An investigation by the state of North Carolina found that Chemours had discharged GenX from its Fayetteville Works plant into the Cape Fear River for years. EPA chief Regan was the state’s top environmental official when the investigation began and led negotiations that resulted in cleanup of the

	<p>river. Gov. Roy Cooper and his current environmental chief unveiled a three-pronged strategy last week address further efforts to reduce a broad category of PFAS chemicals in water sources.</p> <p>Legislation passed by the House would set a national drinking water standard for PFAS and direct the EPA to develop discharge limits for a range of industries suspected of releasing PFAS into the water. The bill has stalled in the Senate.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Origins 14th century Black Death pinpointed
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/science/black-deaths-ancient-origins-traced-to-lake-in-central-asia/
GIST	<p>BERLIN (AP) — Scientists in Europe say they have pinpointed the origins of the Black Death, a bacterial plague that wiped out half of the continent’s population in the 14th century.</p> <p>The findings counter other theories that the disease — which caused repeated outbreaks into the early 19th century and also left its mark across the Middle East and North Africa — might have first emerged in China.</p> <p>Drawing on the work of historian Phil Slavin from the University of Stirling in Scotland, who had suggested the disease’s emergence might be linked to an unusual surge of deaths in a town in Central Asia in 1338-1339, researchers examined DNA from bodies found there.</p> <p>They found genetic fingerprints of the bacterium <i>Yersinia pestis</i> in individuals who had been buried with tombstones referring to a “pestilence” at the site by Lake Issyk Kul, in what is now Kyrgyzstan.</p> <p>In an article published Wednesday in the journal <i>Nature</i>, the researchers detail how the fingerprint reveals the strain that devastated the ancient trading community at Issyk Kul was the precursor to many others which emerged around the time.</p> <p>“We found that the ancient strains from Kyrgyzstan are positioned exactly at the node of this massive diversification event,” said Maria Spyrou, a researcher on disease history at the University of Tuebingen in Germany and lead author of the report. “In other words, we found the Black Death’s source strain and we even know its exact date (1338).”</p> <p>The disease, which is spread by rats and their fleas, is known to have eventually made its way to the Sicilian port of Messina on trade ships arriving from the Black Sea in 1347.</p> <p>Sharon DeWitte, a biological anthropologist at the University of South Carolina who was not involved in the study, said it was exciting to have the DNA evidence to back up the previous theory that the disease emerged in Central Asia.</p> <p>“This study is important because the very precisely dated burials allow for a direct study of the strain as it existed at the time of the initial emergence of the Black Death,” she said.</p> <p>While the authors acknowledge it is theoretically possible for the bacterium to have originated elsewhere and spread to Central Asia without changing significantly, the evidence suggested this was unlikely, DeWitte said.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Extraordinarily low tides to Puget Sound
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/extraordinarily-low-tides-coming-to-puget-sound/
GIST	Puget Sound saw its lowest tide in more than a decade Wednesday, 4 feet lower than the average daily low tide. Another extraordinarily low tide is expected Thursday.

Ian Miller of the University of Washington and Washington Sea Grant explained to [KUOW](#) that a wobble in the moon's orbit is nearing its peak, making the tides roll in and out more powerfully than usual. That wobble, known as the lunar nodal cycle, is giving us the lowest tides in 13 years.

The lowest tide [arrived midday Wednesday](#), at -4.28 feet. On Thursday, the tide is forecast to be out to -4.11 feet at 12:58 p.m.

Miller said that could give us an extra 6 inches of beach we rarely see.

Over the next couple of days, beach naturalists will be giving tours at state parks throughout the region including Richmond Beach, Carkeek Beach, Golden Gardens, Constellation Park/Richey Viewpoint, Lincoln Beach, Seahurst Beach and Saltwater State Park.

You can learn more about the beach naturalists and find out when they will be at the parks [here](#).

As you venture out to the beach, here are a few tips to keep in mind:

Tread lightly and leave no trace. Low tides are the most stressful time for animals on the beach, said Charlotte Spang, a field outreach coordinator for the Seattle Aquarium. Be careful not to walk on eel grass — which juvenile salmon use to hide — and know that turning over a rock could mean ruining a shore crab's lifelong home.

Leave the bucket and pails behind. Critters become accustomed to their homes and cold temperatures. An animal carried around in a bucket may become too warm and will have to find a new home when returned to the ocean.

Touch wildlife gently. If you do want to touch something, make sure that your finger is wet to protect the wildlife, Spang said. "Touch it as carefully as you would touch your own eyelashes," she said.

Be curious. With low tides, more of the intertidal zone will be exposed than in other times of the year. The Seattle Aquarium has [an online guide](#) to identify plants and animals.

Wear a good pair of shoes. They should be able to get wet and ideally have some grip.

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HEADLINE	06/15 Pride flags torn down, set on fire
SOURCE	https://news.yahoo.com/pride-flags-torn-down-set-001030623.html
GIST	<p>Pride flags outside downtown Seattle's Taqueria Cantina restaurant were torn down and then set on fire during a large-scale vandalism incident.</p> <p>The crime happened during sunrise on Wednesday, June 15.</p> <p>"(The suspect) could've just pulled the (Pride) flags, but the fact that they burned them - to me that says a lot," said Taqueria Cantina owner Saul Munoz.</p> <p>Pretty much nothing went untouched.</p> <p>The restaurant's patio furniture was overturned and deliberately broken, while the patio's front gates were ripped away and tossed down a nearby stairwell.</p> <p>"That takes a lot of strength, a lot of energy, to rip off something that's metal," noted Taqueria Cantina co-owner Daniel Ceballos.</p>

Given the fact that no other restaurants and nearby businesses were hit, Taqueria Cantina's owners say they truly worry that they're the victims of hate and homophobia.

"It's really, really sad to experience this. It really breaks my heart," said Ceballos.

The vandalism occurred as Taqueria Cantina was finally entering its prime.

It opened during the pandemic, and its owners say business started slow.

Recently, sales had started to improve, yet, a week away from the restaurant's first-ever pride celebration, even the restaurant's sign is in tatters.

"To me, it's really disheartening because we try to be a house for the LGBTQ+ community," Munoz told KIRO 7.

As police try to identify the man that caused so much damage, Taqueria Cantina's owners say they're persistent and perhaps more prideful than ever.

"If you dislike our community, that's not gonna stop us. If anything, (we'll) go stronger," insisted Munoz.

Anyone with information about this case is asked to call the Seattle Police Department.

Taqueria Cantina's owners have set up a GoFundMe page to cover the costs of damages. They told KIRO 7 any additional money will be donated to help LGBTQ+ charities.

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HEADLINE	06/15 Mass shootings in developed countries
SOURCE	https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20220615-over-70-of-mass-shootings-in-developed-countries-happen-in-the-u-s
GIST	<p>Mass shootings in the U.S. account for 73 percent of all 139 incidents occurring in developed countries between 1998 to 2019. During this time, 62 percent of all 1,318 fatalities from the attacks also happened in the U.S.</p> <p>These are the findings of a shocking new study, published in the peer-reviewed Taylor & Francis's <i>International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice</i>.</p> <p>It shows some 101 attacks occurred in the U.S. during this period, leading to 816 deaths.</p> <p>In comparison, France had the next highest number of mass shootings, with eight; and these lead to 179 deaths.</p> <p>Half of the 36 developed countries studied have not had a single mass shooting in the last 22 years, and only five had more than two incidents. In stark contrast, the US has a mass shooting every single year – it is the only country to do so.</p> <p>The research has been carried out by a leading expert on such confrontations, Assistant Professor, Dr. Jason R Silva, from William Paterson University, who has analyzed the differences in characteristics between U.S. mass shootings and all other countries – with mass shootings being classified here as “a public incident involving four or more fatalities, with at least some victims chosen indiscriminately”.</p> <p>Emerging patterns show:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 91% of perpetrators were born in the country they attacked · 99% were male · One-third had military experience

- 7% had a history of law enforcement experience

The study is calling on further research to help inform policy on the issue. And Silva, based at the University's Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice, says it is important to learn lessons from incidents for future approaches.

"Many developed countries instituted policies in the immediate aftermath of an attack that may have contributed to stopping the problem, and this can provide lessons for future approaches to U.S. mass shooting intervention and prevention.

"For example, in the wake of three shootings in Finland between 2007-2009, the Finnish government issued new firearm guidelines for handguns and revolvers, which were the primary firearms during these attacks. Applicants for handgun licenses are now required to be active members of a gun club and vetted by their doctor and police."

By analyzing openly accessible data from both developed and developing nations internationally, as well as reviewing previous research on mass shootings, Silva was able to paint a picture of the differences and similarities in the characteristics of mass shootings across the world. Crucially, he is also able to provide insight into the type of person carrying out the attacks; the details of the incident; and, indeed, the motives of why they took place – if such an explanation could be found.

Overall, it was shown that in developed countries (including the U.S.), shootings were more likely to be carried out by those with ideological motives, and fame-seeking motives. As well as schools, attacks in open spaces were also common – and most incidents involved handguns and shotguns.

Looking at the U.S. separately, shooters were more likely to use more than one firearm. The motivation of their attack was also distinct from other countries, with perpetrators facing employment and financial issues, as well as relationship problems.

"American mass shooters were more likely to attack factories, warehouses, and offices than perpetrators in all other combined countries. While individuals from all countries suffer from strain, this particular strain is largely a U.S. mass shooting motive," explains Silva.

"Security measures should therefore focus on target hardening in high-risk workplaces, modelling other location-based intervention strategies that have effectively decreased incidents and casualties.

"Relationship problems present another distinct form of strain contributing to U.S. mass shootings. This is not to say that relationship problems do not exist in other countries or that they do not result in violence. In fact, many other countries have much higher rates of intimate partner violence and homicide. However, it is uniquely American that relationship problems end in mass shootings: where individuals outside of those contributing to relationship problems were also, or instead, targeted at random."

In developing countries, mass shootings were more likely to involve perpetrators with a military or police history, and to occur within their place of work – so, an "attack from within". 64 percent of all mass shootings involved this type of incident. A motive was often "difficult" to source from within publicly available documents though.

Comparing and summarizing, Silva added: "Mass shootings are a uniquely American problem, particularly in relation to other developed countries."

His research disqualified incidents involving profit-driven criminal activity, state-sponsored violence, and familicide, as well as incidents involving organized terrorism and/or battles over sovereignty. This was because, he states, "it does not provide a valuable comparison with the U.S.– the primary focus of this study – the US has never had mass shootings rooted in organized terrorism and/or battles over sovereignty".

	Limitations of the research include its “reliance” on open-source data, which “means it is impossible to know if all cases have been captured” – an issue greatest in developing countries with limited data and non-English language news outlets hindering the ability to search and find information.
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HEADLINE	06/15 Shoplifter charged felonies; new initiative
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3519496/prolific-aurora-home-depot-shoplifter-felonies/
GIST	<p>The Seattle City Attorney is packaging multiple misdemeanor charges into single felony counts to expedite the prosecution of “high utilizers” of the criminal justice system.</p> <p>The case of one prolific shoplifter at Aurora Ave’s Home Depot shows the program in practice as the attorney looks to prosecute 118 such high utilizers.</p> <p>Every person on their initial list has been referred by police to the City Attorney’s Office 12 or more times in the past five years and at least once in the past eight months, most often for theft or trespassing.</p> <p>Late in 2021, the Home Depot on Aurora Ave. called Seattle Police over a reported retail theft and court order violation. Witnesses reported the suspect, Dylan Jackman, concealing tools under his jacket. The detective assigned to the case discovered that Jackman had been reported for theft at the same location eight times since 2020. Jackman had trespassed from the property three separate times within a similar time frame. Employees at the store recognized him on sight, according to King County Prosecution charging documents.</p> <p>“Even more concerning is his failure to abide by terms of the valid Anti-Harassment order ... that prohibited him from returning to this Home Depot ... The defendant’s behavior demonstrates that he is likely to commit a violent offense,” the charging documents continue.</p> <p>“He threatened to kill [one employee,] pulled a sharpened spearhead on another and had to be talked into dropping a shovel that he was wielding as a weapon in a separate instance. It is clear that, if released, the defendant will return to this location and commit yet another violent offense.”</p> <p>Individually, the 18 misdemeanor cases sent to the Office of the Seattle City Attorney in a 15-month period against Jackman were not sufficient to hold him in custody. Upon his latest trespass from Home Depot, the city attorney was able to package his case under three felony counts: Burglary In The Second Degree, Felony Harassment, Burglary In The Second Degree, and Burglary In The Second Degree.</p> <p>Ann Davison, elected to the city attorney’s office this year, has previously couched the high utilizer initiative as an attempt to improve the level of treatment options available to repeat offenders.</p> <p>“What I’m anticipating is there’s going to be some treatment options that are just not available at the misdemeanor level that are available at the felony level,” Davison told KTTH’s The Jason Rantz Show in March.</p> <p>As of June 2022, it is not clear exactly what those treatment options entail.</p> <p>“As of the date of your request, our office does not have records that demonstrate that individuals on the HUI list accessed resources not available to them if they had been convicted of a misdemeanor,” a public disclosure representative with the city attorney’s office wrote to MyNorthwest.</p> <p>Seattle’s Public Defender Association has previously signaled its concern that the idea of expanded treatment options at the felony level is a mischaracterization of competency restoration: wherein suspects are deemed legally competent to stand trial with the ability to recall basic facts.</p> <p>“This has little or nothing to do with someone being stabilized, treated, and equipped to manage independently in the community and to reduce problematic future behavior,” Lisa Daugaard, director with the PDA, wrote to MyNorthwest.</p>

“Creating greater obstacles for someone in order for them to get help is one of the central distortions that the legal system interposes into the realm of health care and recovery,” Daugaard said. “This is not to say that people who commit harmful felonies should not be charged with felonies to achieve temporary interruption/incapacitation, or accountability. But this should not be rationalized in terms of access to different or better ‘treatment.’”

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HEADLINE	06/15 ACLU: cheap prison labor exploited
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jun/15/us-prison-workers-low-wages-exploited
GIST	<p>Incarcerated workers in the US produce at least \$11bn in goods and services annually but receive just pennies an hour in wages for their prison jobs, according to a new report from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).</p> <p>Nearly two-thirds of all prisoners in the US, which imprisons more of its population than any other country in the world, have jobs in state and federal prisons. That figure amounts to roughly 800,000 people, researchers estimated in the report, which is based on extensive public records requests, questionnaires and interviews with incarcerated workers.</p> <p>ACLU researchers say the findings outlined in Wednesday’s report raise concerns about the systemic exploitation of prisoners, who are compelled to work sometimes difficult and dangerous jobs without basic labor protections and little or no training while making close to nothing.</p> <p>Most incarcerated workers are tasked with general prison maintenance that is crucial to keep the facilities running, according to the ACLU researchers, who worked with the University of Chicago Law School’s Global Human Rights Clinic.</p> <p>“State governments and the prison system are extracting tremendous value from a captive and exploited workforce all while claiming they can’t afford to pay them a liveable wage,” said Jennifer Turner, the principal author of the report.</p> <p>More than 80% of incarcerated laborers do general prison maintenance, including cleaning, cooking, repair work, laundry and other essential services. For paid non-industry jobs, workers make an average of 13 cents to 52 cents an hour, according to the report. Seven states – Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina and Texas – pay nothing for the vast majority of prison work.</p> <p>Incarcerated workers who are paid often see most of their pay withheld for “taxes, room and board expenses, and court costs”, the report states.</p> <p>“We are saving [the prisons] millions of dollars and getting paid pennies in return ... All the jobs we are doing in prison are not really benefiting us; it is more benefitting the prison system. I work a job making \$450 for a whole year,” said Latashia Millender, an inmate at a prison in Illinois, according to the report.</p> <p>Public officials have acknowledged that the work of these unpaid and poorly compensated incarcerated laborers is crucial: “There’s no way we can take care of our facilities, our roads, our ditches, if we didn’t have inmate labor,” Warren Yeager, a former Gulf county, Florida, commissioner said to the Florida Times-Union.</p> <p>Other officials have said they oppose new sentencing and parole laws that would reduce the pool of incarcerated workers, according to the report. Steven Prator, a Louisiana sheriff, said: “We need to keep some out there, that’s the ones that you can work, that pick up trash, the work release program, but guess what? Those are the ones that they are releasing ... the good ones, that we use every day to wash cars, change oil in our cars, to cook in the kitchen, to do all that where we save money ... well, they are gonna let them out.”</p>

More than 75% of workers told ACLU researchers if they can't work or decline to do so, they are subject to punishment ranging from solitary confinement to the loss of family visits to denials of sentence reductions.

Most incarcerated workers are not provided with skills and training for their work that would help them secure jobs when they are released, Turner said; 70% said they did not receive any formal job training, and 70% said they couldn't afford essentials such as soap and phone calls with their wages.

"The United States has a long, problematic history of using incarcerated workers as a source of cheap labor and to subsidize the costs of our bloated prison system," said Turner, a principal human rights researcher with the ACLU's Human Rights Program.

"Incarcerated workers are stripped of even the most minimal protections against labor exploitation and abuse. They are paid pennies for their work in often unsafe working conditions even as they produce billions of dollars for states and the federal government."

Some workers make slightly higher wages working for "state prison industries", which are typically state-owned programs run by the corrections department to produce goods or provide services for other government agencies. That work includes manufacturing furniture, cleaning supplies and uniforms for other government workers, washing laundry for public hospitals or universities and working for call centers of the department of motor vehicles.

In 2021, more than 51,000 people held industry jobs, accounting for 6.5% of prison labor, the researchers found. Those workers are paid 30 cents to \$1.30 an hour on average. In Oregon, for example, the DMV pays incarcerated workers \$4 to \$6 a day, while a worker outside of prison doing the same DMV job makes an average of \$80 a day.

Incarcerated workers in prison industries programs generated goods and services worth \$2.09bn nationally in 2021, the authors found, citing estimates from the National Correctional Industries Association, a prison industry group. The researchers estimated that the maintenance work of prisoners is worth \$9bn a year, but cautioned that there was no centralized data on the value of this work and that the figure was probably an undercount and a rough estimate from earlier studies.

The authors of the report are calling for extensive changes around the use of prison labor, including ensuring that such work is voluntary and provides workers with the same wages and protections granted to other workers as well as work programs that give incarcerated workers marketable skills and training.

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HEADLINE	06/15 Man shot Ronald Reagan gains full freedom
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jun/16/john-hinckley-gains-full-freedom-41-years-after-ronald-reagan-assassination-attempt
GIST	<p>John Hinckley, who shot and wounded US president Ronald Reagan in 1981, has been freed from court oversight, officially concluding decades of supervision by legal and mental health professionals.</p> <p>"After 41 years 2 months and 15 days, FREEDOM AT LAST!!!," he wrote on Twitter shortly after noon on Wednesday.</p> <p>The lifting of all restrictions had been expected since late September. US district court judge Paul L Friedman in Washington had said he would free Hinckley on 15 June if he continued to remain mentally stable in the community in Virginia where he has lived since 2016.</p> <p>Hinckley, who was acquitted of trying to kill the then US president by reason of insanity, spent the decades before that in a Washington mental hospital.</p>

Hinckley has gained nearly 30,000 followers on Twitter and YouTube in recent months as the judge loosened Hinckley's restrictions before fully lifting all of them.

But the greying 67-year-old is far from being the household name that he became after shooting and wounding the 40th US president and several others outside a Washington hotel. Today, historians say Hinckley is at best a question on a quiz show and someone who unintentionally helped build the Reagan legend and inspire a push for stricter gun control.

"If Hinckley had succeeded in killing Reagan, then he would have been a pivotal historical figure," HW Brands, a historian and Reagan biographer, wrote in an email to the Associated Press. "As it is, he is a misguided soul whom history has already forgotten."

Barbara A Perry, a professor and director of presidential studies at the University of Virginia's Miller Center, said that Hinckley "would be maybe a Jeopardy question". But his impact remains tangible in Reagan's legacy.

"For the president himself to have been so seriously wounded, and to come back from that that actually made Ronald Reagan the legend that he became ... like the movie hero that he was," Perry said.

Reagan showed grace and humor in the face of death, Perry said. After being shot, the president told emergency room doctors that he hoped they were all Republicans. He later joked to his wife Nancy that he was sorry he "forgot to duck".

When the president first spoke to Congress after the shooting, he looked "just a little bit thinner, but he's still the robust cowboy that is Ronald Reagan", Perry said.

The assassination attempt paralyzed Reagan press secretary James Brady, who died in 2014.

In 1993, president Bill Clinton signed into law the Brady bill, which required a five-day waiting period for handgun purchases and background checks of prospective buyers. The Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence and the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence are named after Brady and his wife Sarah.

The shooting also injured Secret Service agent Timothy McCarthy and Washington police officer Thomas Delahanty.

Hinckley was 25 and suffering from acute psychosis at the time of the attack. When jurors found him not guilty by reason of insanity, they said he needed treatment and not a lifetime in confinement. He was ordered to live at St Elizabeths hospital in Washington.

In the 2000s, Hinckley began making visits to his parents' home in a gated community in Williamsburg. A 2016 court order granted him permission to live with his mother full time, albeit under various restrictions, after experts said his mental illness had been in remission for decades.

Hinckley's mother died in July. He signed a lease on a one-bedroom apartment in the area last year and began living there with his cat, Theo, according to court filings.

Over the years, the court restricted Hinckley from owning a gun or using drugs or alcohol. He also couldn't contact the actor Jodie Foster, with whom he was obsessed at the time of the shooting, or any of his victims or their families.

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HEADLINE	06/15 Confederate flag-toting man, son convicted
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/15/us/jan-6-confederate-flag-conviction.html
GIST	A Delaware man who flew a Confederate battle flag inside the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, was convicted with his son on Wednesday by a federal judge of the top count in their indictment: obstructing the certification of the 2020 presidential vote.

The two men, Kevin and Hunter Seefried, were also found guilty at the bench trial by Judge Trevor N. McFadden of four misdemeanors, including disorderly conduct and illegally entering a restricted area.

The daylong trial, in Federal District Court in Washington, was the eighth case connected to the Jan. 6 attack to have gone to trial. In seven of the cases, defendants have been found guilty — often with exceptionally quick deliberations — of crimes including obstruction, theft of property and trespassing. One case, also heard by Judge McFadden, [resulted in a full acquittal](#).

During the Seefrieds' trial, prosecutors argued that the father and son were among the first wave of the rioters to breach the Capitol on Jan. 6., climbing in through a broken window near the Senate wing door that other attackers had just shattered. Hunter Seefried had been charged with helping to break the window by plucking out a shard of glass that remained in the frame, but Judge McFadden acquitted him of the count.

[A key witness at the trial was Officer Eugene Goodman](#), whose actions on the day of the attack were captured in a widely circulated video recorded by a reporter in the Capitol. Officer Goodman, who was later honored with a featured invitation to [President Biden's inauguration](#), was instrumental in leading a pack of rioters away from lawmakers inside the House and Senate chambers.

During his time on the stand, Officer Goodman testified that some of the rioters sprayed him with what he believed to be bear spray, threw objects at him and tried to shake him and other officers off scaffolding.

He also recounted throwing up in reaction to the tear gas deployed by Washington's Metropolitan Police when they arrived to reinforce the Capitol Police, who had been overrun.

"It looked like something out of medieval times, where you see one big force fighting another force," Officer Goodman said.

Officer Goodman also testified that he had attempted to prevent Kevin Seefried from progressing toward the Senate chamber and that Mr. Seefried "jabbed" at him three times with the Confederate flag.

The obstruction count that both men were convicted of carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison, but rioters who have been found guilty of the crime have received far shorter sentences.

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HEADLINE	06/15 Canada lavish money laundering schemes
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/15/world/canada/canada-money-laundering.html
GIST	<p>VANCOUVER — Self-professed students were buying multimillion-dollar homes in the Vancouver area, with dubious sources of income, or none at all.</p> <p>A family of modest means transferred at least 114 million Canadian dollars to British Columbia.</p> <p>Loan sharks cleaned their dirty money by giving garbage bags and hockey bags full of illicit Canadian 20 dollar bills to gamblers who took it onto casino floors.</p> <p>Those were just some of the findings from a long-awaited report into money laundering in Canada's western province of British Columbia, which after two years of testimony was finally released by a special commission on Wednesday.</p> <p>Canada is a "major money laundering country," with weak law enforcement and gaps in its laws, that put it on a list of countries that included Afghanistan, China and Colombia, according to a 2019 report by the State Department.</p> <p>Few places in Canada launder as much money as the province of British Columbia, specifically the region around Vancouver, which has one of the country's biggest underground economies. The</p>

province has earned an international reputation as a haven for “snow washing” — a term for money laundering in Canada, according to government officials.

Billions of dollars a year have been laundered there by criminals, using tactics such as gambling in casinos, buying and selling luxury goods and taking out residential mortgages that are paid off in cash installments small enough not to trigger any alarm bells.

British Columbia’s gambling industry is a cash cow for the provincial government. At its height in 2015-2016, [gambling generated a record 3.1 billion](#) Canadian dollars in revenue, about one-third of which went to the government and was used to finance hospitals and health care, community organizations and other projects.

The commission was [tasked](#) to delve deeply into how bad money laundering in the province had gotten, and whether regulatory organizations, as well as the government itself, had failed to stem it, or even worse, turned a blind eye to it. While the report found no evidence of corruption, some elected officials were aware that suspicious funds from the gambling industry were entering the provincial revenue stream and took no action to stop it.

The report, more than 1,800 pages long, lays out the staggering scope of money laundering in the province and sets out more than 100 recommendations for addressing it.

The province should create an anti-money laundering commissioner and a dedicated money laundering investigation and intelligence police unit to address this “corrosive form of criminality,” the report says.

“Money laundering is fundamentally destabilizing to the society and the economy that we all want for the province,” Austin Cullen, the head of the commission and a former British Columbia Supreme Court Justice, told reporters on Wednesday. “Sophisticated money launderers have used British Columbia as a clearing house or a terminus for laundering an astounding amount of dirty money.”

The provincial government announced the inquiry in May 2019 after a series of government-sponsored reports found what the commission called “extraordinary” levels of money laundering in the real estate, casino, horse racing and luxury car sectors, fueled in part by the illegal drug trade.

Books, podcasts and news reports had raised the alarm across the country, accusing gangs in China of importing fentanyl to the Western province, and then laundering the proceeds through casinos and high end real estate, helping to further inflate housing prices in a city already deemed the most expensive for housing in the country.

A 2019 [report](#) to the province estimated that in the prior year, up to 5.3 billion Canadian dollars in laundered money flowed through real estate investments in British Columbia, inflating housing prices by as high as 7.5 percent because they were purchased with the proceeds of crime as a way to clean — or legitimize — that money.

The commission, headed by Mr. Cullen, a well-respected judge, has been a constant drum beat across the country throughout the pandemic, hearing from almost 200 witnesses, including a former premier, a government minister accused of ignoring warnings about money laundering in casinos because they offered huge revenue for the government, and police officers alleging their investigations into illicit gambling were shut down for similar political reasons.

Witnesses told the commission how one scheme worked. Rich gamblers from China flew in, wheeling hockey bags stuffed with tens of thousands of Canadian 20 dollar bills to play baccarat at private salons inside Vancouver-area casinos. The money was suspected to come from loan sharks connected to Chinese criminal gangs and drug traffickers. The loan sharks laundered their drug money by lending it to the gamblers, who would in turn repay them with clean money deposited to bank accounts in China or Hong Kong. This became known as the “Vancouver Model.”

	<p>Specialized gambling police and lottery investigators raised an alarm but found their investigations shut down or blocked, or even worse, they were fired, the commission heard. The betting limits in casinos were hiked to 100,000 Canadian dollars per hand, allowing even more money to be laundered.</p> <p>British Columbia's Attorney General David Eby, who has been campaigning against money laundering for many years, told reporters earlier this month he hoped the report would offer his government a road map for turning the province and Vancouver, "into a model for fighting money laundering instead of a center where it takes place."</p> <p>Already, the British Columbia government has taken some steps to combat the problem. It has tightened the rules at casinos, requiring gamblers to declare their source of funds and in 2019, launched a public land ownership registry, requiring certain real estate holders in the province to disclose their owners, particularly those hidden behind shell companies, trusts, partnerships and other "beneficial owners."</p>
Return to Top	<p>Click on link to view <i>Commission of Inquiry into Money Laundering in British Columbia</i>: https://cullencommission.ca/com-rep/</p>

HEADLINE	06/15 Rash of crimes near Everett Highway 99
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/residents-businesses-near-everetts-highway-99-plead-for-help-after-rash-of-crimes
GIST	<p>EVERETT, Wash. — Residents and business owners along Evergreen Way/Highway 99 in Everett are asking for help to combat a rash of crimes after repeated break-ins, vandalism and other offenses.</p> <p>The crimes have grown more seriously after a blaze was ignited at a nearby cannabis store Wednesday morning.</p> <p>Those in that part of town are blaming it on the local homeless population, or those lingering in the area, although KOMO News has not yet been able to confirm a connection.</p> <p>Nearby business employee Patrick Mina said he hopes something can be done about the crime,</p> <p>"it's about making enough smoke and enough stink to where people do something about it," he said after being asked why he wanted to do an interview with KOMO. "Safety and the ability to run a business in America is not partisan. It has nothing to do with political ideology and we've got to get together and fix it."</p> <p>At Chuck's Chevron and Service Center, manager Jeff Matheson said repeated break-ins prompted the installation of metal barricades, "and since then, there hasn't been any problems with people breaking the main windows."</p> <p>At nearby Bloom Cannabis, a front wall was broken and torn down Tuesday, according to an employee.</p> <p>Andy Bright, the owner of Jet Cannabis, said someone set fire to his establishment early Wednesday morning, causing some damage.</p> <p>"Our trash was deliberately moved up to the side of the building and started on fire by somebody," he said. "We're going to be out of business for a couple of days."</p> <p>It is not just business owners who are having issues, but also those who own property.</p> <p>Behind the Home Depot, Julie Londo showed a camp and trash in the woods next to her place.</p> <p>"There's drugs, there's needles, there's crime," she said, and as a result she has had difficulties managing the property. "Do something about it. Get rid of the garbage. Find places for these people to live."</p>

"A lot of the people around here that need help with mental health, substance issues, things that need long-term commitments," Matheson said.

"I think there's larger policies in place that are limiting their (law enforcement) impact so when they do make arrests, the penalties aren't being applied," Bright said.

In a statement to KOMO news on Wednesday, a spokesperson for the Snohomish County Sheriff's Office said: "We encourage residents to call 911 anytime they witness a crime occurring. We also encourage business owners to always report any vandalism to their business buildings. In a proactive effort to reduce crime in south Snohomish County, in 2021 we started Operation Clean Streets which is a monthly patrol emphasis in south county surrounding Airport Rd & Hwy 99. Our agency partners with other local law enforcement agencies and we work together to develop intelligence, arrest warrant subjects and target criminal activity in this area. We remain committed to public safety and continue to partner and meet regularly with local business owners and community members in south county to work together towards reducing crime and making it a safer place to live and work."

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HEADLINE	06/15 Interpol arrests hundreds, seizes \$millions
SOURCE	https://www.interpol.int/News-and-Events/News/2022/Hundreds-arrested-and-millions-seized-in-global-INTERPOL-operation-against-social-engineering-scams
GIST	<p>LYON, France -- A worldwide crackdown on social engineering fraud has seen scammers identified globally, substantial criminal assets seized and new investigative leads triggered in every continent.</p> <p>The two-month (8 March – 8 May 2022) Operation, codenamed First Light 2022, saw 76 countries take part in an international clampdown on the organized crime groups behind telecommunications and social engineering scams.</p> <p>Police in participating countries raided national call centres suspected of telecommunications or scamming fraud, particularly telephone deception, romance scams, e-mail deception, and connected financial crime.</p> <p>Although results are still coming in, preliminary figures reached so far include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1,770 locations raided worldwide• Some 3,000 suspects identified• Some 2,000 operators, fraudsters and money launderers arrested• Some 4,000 bank accounts frozen• Some USD 50 million worth of illicit funds intercepted <p>Tangible results</p> <p>Based on intelligence exchanged in the framework of the operation, the Singapore Police Force rescued a teenage scam victim who had been tricked into pretending to be kidnapped, sending videos of himself with fake wounds to his parents and seeking a EUR 1.5 million ransom.</p> <p>A Chinese national wanted in connection with a Ponzi scheme estimated to have defrauded nearly 24,000 victims out of EUR 34 million was arrested in Papua New Guinea and returned to China via Singapore.</p> <p>Get-rich-quick schemes</p> <p>With the Internet creating new online career prospects, companies and professionals who turn to e-commerce affiliate and EBShopp business opportunities are increasingly being scammed.</p> <p>As part of Operation First Light 2022, the Singapore Police Force arrested eight suspects linked to Ponzi-like job scams. Scammers would offer high-paying online marketing jobs via social media and messaging systems where victims would initially make small earnings, and subsequently be required to recruit more members to earn commissions.</p> <p>Making the case: INTERPOL police capabilities</p>

Emerging trends uncovered during operations were shared with member countries in the form of INTERPOL purple notices detailing:

- the way money mule herders are laundering money through the personal bank accounts of victims;
- how social media platforms are driving human trafficking, entrapping people into forced labour, sexual slavery, or captivity in casinos or on fishing vessels;
- an increase in vishing fraud with criminals pretending to be bank officials to trick victims into sharing online log-in details;
- a growth in cybercriminals posing as INTERPOL officials to obtain money from victims believing themselves to be under investigation.

“The international nature of these crimes can only be addressed successfully by law enforcement working together beyond borders, which is why INTERPOL is critical to providing police the world over with a coordinated tactical response,” added Mr Corcoran.

“The transnational and digital nature of different types of telecom and social engineering fraud continues to present grave challenges for local police authorities, because perpetrators operate from a different country or even continent than their victims and keep updating their fraud schemes,” said Duan Daqi, Head of the INTERPOL National Central Bureau in Beijing.

“INTERPOL provides a unique platform for police cooperation to address this challenge. Though Operation Firstlight 2022 is concluded, our collective law enforcement efforts will continue as the crimes persist,” added Mr Duan.

To identify the criminal assets that would require interception during tactical operations, countries shared intelligence via INTERPOL’s secure global police communications network I-24/7 ahead of time, feeding INTERPOL’s Financial Crimes Analysis File with data on suspects, suspicious bank accounts, unlawful transactions and communications means such as telephone numbers, email addresses, fraudulent websites and IP addresses.

An annual operation launched in 2014, First Light 2022 was carried out with the financial support of China’s Ministry of Public Security.

Whilst initial First Light operations took place across Southeast Asia, this 2022 edition marks the second time law enforcement has coordinated First Light on a global scale, with tactical operations taking place on every continent.

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HEADLINE	06/15 Suspect confesses: killed missing journalist
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/search-missing-british-journalist-indigenous-expert-brazil-now/story?id=85356140
GIST	<p>A search in the deep Brazilian Amazon for missing British journalist Dom Phillips and Indigenous rights expert Bruno Araujo Pereira has now turned into a homicide investigation, Brazilian federal police confirmed to ABC News on Wednesday.</p> <p>In a press conference from Manaus, the capital of the Amazonas state, Federal Police Chief Alexandre Fontes confirmed that the main suspect -- Amarildo da Costa Oliveira, known as "Pelado" -- confessed to police that he killed Phillips, 57, and Pereira, 41, on Sunday, June 5.</p> <p>According to the police, Oseney da Costa Oliveira, Pelado's brother, did not admit any involvement in the crime. He was arrested for aggravated murder and will remain in custody, police said.</p> <p>The latest development comes after human remains were found on Friday in the remote Javari Valley region of Brazil, near the border with Peru. Police told ABC News on Wednesday that forensic exams are still being conducted on the remains to positively determine if they are Phillips and Pereira.</p>

Phillips' wife, Alessandra Sampaio, told ABC News that police have informed her that the two bodies recovered from the Javari Valley are likely those of her husband and Pereira.

The men went missing on June 5 while on a boat trip on the Amazon as part of a reporting project Phillips is working on.

Federal police identified Oseney da Costa Oliveira, as the man detained for questioning in the missing persons case. He is the brother of Amarildo da Costa Oliveira, who has been detained since last week after blood was found on his fishing boat. Police are testing the blood to see if it matches either of the missing men.

Witnesses told police the brothers' boat was seen traveling behind one Phillips and Pereira were on around the time they disappeared, Brazilian authorities said.

Police said Amarildo da Costa Oliveira, has denied any involvement in the men's disappearance, claiming he stayed home on June 5 and went out hunting the following day.

The da Costa Oliveira brothers have not been charged in the case, police said.

At least five other people have been questioned since the investigation started but no arrests related to the disappearances have been made, a source with the Brazilian federal police told ABC News.

Phillips, 57, and Pereira, 41, were last heard from by colleagues while traveling by boat in the Javari Valley region of the Amazon, relatives said.

Phillips was doing research on patrol teams Bruno Pereira had helped create to crack down on illegal fishing and hunting, an initiative that prompted threats against Bruno Pereira, The New York Times reported on Tuesday.

Phillips was on one of his last reporting trips for an upcoming book he was writing as part of a 2021 fellowship awarded by the Alicia Patterson Foundation, according to Margaret Engel, the foundation's executive director.

There was an international outcry after accusations surfaced that responding agencies were slow to act in investigating the disappearances.

At a vigil outside the Brazilian embassy in London last Thursday, Phillips' family members urged Brazilian authorities to keep investigating.

"We want to find out what is happening to them and we want anyone responsible for any criminal acts to be brought to justice," Phillips' sister, Sian Phillips, said. "We want a persistent, deep and open investigation."

The family's calls were joined by environmentalist groups, activists, celebrities and news organizations.

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro initially appeared to cast blame on Phillips and Bruno Pereira, saying they "were on an adventure that is not recommended." He continued, "It could be an accident, it could be that they were executed, anything could have happened."

Those comments were "obviously upsetting" to the family said Paul Sherwood, Sian Phillips' partner.

People close to Phillips and Pereira refuted that they were on a reckless excursion. Engel, who was collaborating with Phillips on his upcoming book, said, "Nothing he did was off-the-cuff."

"He was not naïve about the dangers that were there," she said.

	<p>Soraya Zaiden, who worked closely with Pereira at the Union of Indigenous Peoples of the Javari Valley (Univaja), a local organization assisting in the search for the missing men, said Pereira was unlikely to put anyone in danger.</p> <p>Violence has taken place in the past in the Javari Valley, where illegal mining activities, drug trafficking and deforestation is resisted by groups trying to preserve the rainforest and the culture of its Indigenous inhabitants. A member of the Brazilian government agency FUNAI, which is tasked with protecting Indigenous peoples' interests, was shot and killed in the Javari Valley in 2019, advocates told ABC News.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Gunman's wife: warned police about gun
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/wife-warn-police-deadly-shooting-85429822
GIST	<p>EL MONTE, Calif. -- The wife of a man who killed two Southern California police officers Tuesday in a shootout told a television station that her husband had previously attacked her and she warned the officers that he had a gun inside a suburban Los Angeles motel.</p> <p>The gunman, identified as Justin William Flores, was shot and killed at the scene. His wife told KCBS-TV that he had attacked her two days ago and she had moved into the motel to escape him but he tracked her down.</p> <p>"I am so deeply sorry, my deepest condolences for saving me, I'm so, so, so sorry," Diana Flores tearfully told the TV station. "They didn't deserve that, or their families. They really didn't. They were trying to help me and I told them before they went in the room, 'Don't go in. He has a gun.'"</p> <p>The officers — Cpl. Michael Paredes and Officer Joseph Santana, who were identified Wednesday — were both slain while investigating a possible stabbing at a motel in El Monte.</p> <p>Gov. Gavin Newsom announced that flags at the state Capitol will be flown at half-staff in their honor.</p> <p>Paredes and Santana — one on the force for more than two decades and the other for just months — were both were raised in and worked for the city of El Monte, a suburb of 107,000 people in the San Gabriel Valley. They became only the third and fourth officers in the El Monte Police Department's history to die in the line of duty. A vigil is scheduled for Saturday.</p> <p>Flores was on probation for a gun charge at the time of the shooting, which occurred a day after his probation officer requested that he return to court later in the month, court records show.</p> <p>The coroner's office has not yet released the name of the suspect but the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office identified Flores to The Associated Press.</p> <p>Mourners on Wednesday left bouquets, wreaths of flowers and candles outside the El Monte police station to honor the fallen officers.</p> <p>"Corporal Paredes and Officer Santana paid the ultimate sacrifice," the city of El Monte wrote in a news release, "while in performance of a noble profession, serving the community they loved."</p> <p>Flores, 35, served two stints in state prison for vehicle theft and burglary, according to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, and was most recently released in 2012.</p> <p>In March 2020, Flores was arrested and charged with being a felon in possession of a firearm and for possession of narcotics for personal use. He pleaded guilty last year to being a felon in possession of a firearm, a felony charge that could have sent him back to prison for three years.</p> <p>Instead he was sentenced to two years of probation and 20 days in jail and LA County District Attorney George Gascón, who is facing a recall effort for his progressive policies, is facing criticism for Flores' plea deal.</p>

“The sentence he received in the firearm case was consistent with case resolutions for this type of offense given his criminal history and the nature of the offense,” the DA’s office said in a statement Wednesday. “At the time the court sentenced him, Mr. Flores did not have a documented history of violence.”

Court records obtained by AP do not specify why Flores’ probation officer had requested Monday that he return to court; records show that a hearing was scheduled for June 27.

The county’s probation department declined to comment and Flores’ attorney in the case did not return a request for comment on Wednesday. But the Los Angeles Times reported that Flores had violated his probation, triggering the return to court.

Few details have emerged about what occurred during Tuesday’s violence. The officers went to the Siesta Inn in El Monte, east of Los Angeles, around 4:45 p.m. Tuesday, for a welfare check where a woman had possibly been stabbed.

The officers “confronted the suspect,” Los Angeles County sheriff’s homicide Capt. Andrew Meyer said Tuesday.

Gunfire erupted inside a motel room and the gunman then fled into the parking lot, where more gunfire was exchanged, Meyer said.

Meyer said he didn’t know whether the officers were shot inside the motel or outside. They died at a hospital. A gun was found at the scene.

Meyer said investigators were interviewing a woman from the hotel who they believe was the suspect’s girlfriend. Diana Flores, who described herself as the suspect’s wife and had his first name tattooed on her chest, told KCBS that officers must have been reacting to a “false call” because she hadn’t been stabbed on Tuesday.

“I got stabbed the day before that,” she told the TV station.

Paredes, 42, started as a cadet in the department before becoming a full-time officer in 2000, according to a news release. He is survived by his wife, daughter and son.

Santana, 31, had been with the El Monte force for less than a year when he was killed. He previously served as a deputy with the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department for three years, the news release stated.

This tragic loss hits close to home for us,” the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department wrote on Twitter. “He was a great partner and loved by all who knew him.”

Santana also worked as a part-time public works employee for El Monte for six years before turning to law enforcement. He is survived by his wife, daughter and twin sons.

El Monte interim Police Chief Ben Lowry on Tuesday called the officers heroes.

“These two men were loved,” Lowry said. “They were good men. They paid the ultimate sacrifice, serving their community trying to help somebody.”

“They were murdered by a coward and we are grieving, and that hurts,” he said.

El Monte Mayor Jessica Ancona said the officers died “while trying to keep a family safe.”

The killings came just one day after a California Highway Patrol officer was shot and critically wounded during a traffic stop in the Studio City area of Los Angeles.

	The 27-year-old officer is expected to recover, authorities said. A bloodhound helped police track down the suspect, who surrendered to police Tuesday in a homeless encampment in the San Fernando Valley.
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HEADLINE	06/15 UK arrests man: spying for Russia
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/jun/15/man-arrested-at-gatwick-airport-on-suspicion-of-spying-for-russia
GIST	<p>Security officials trying to thwart Russian spying in Britain have arrested a man at Gatwick airport as he was trying to board a flight to leave the UK.</p> <p>The arrest followed a joint intelligence-led operation by Scotland Yard's counter-terrorism command – which deals with arrests for espionage matters – and the British security services.</p> <p>It is understood detectives knew the man might be trying to leave the UK and were waiting for him at Gatwick airport.</p> <p>The man in his 40s was arrested on Monday under the Official Secrets Act, under a provision that outlaws spying on the UK.</p> <p>He is still in custody, and detectives have up to 96 hours to hold him, with approval from a court to extend his detention. They then have to charge the man, or release him and drop the case, or release him while he is still under investigation.</p> <p>The Metropolitan police said: “We can confirm that officers from the Met’s counter terrorism command arrested a man in his 40s at Gatwick airport on Monday 13 June on suspicion of offences under section 1 of the Official Secrets Act 1911. He has been taken to a London police station, where he currently remains in police custody. Inquiries continue.”</p> <p>Tension between Russia under Vladimir Putin and the UK has been high for years, but worsened after a nerve agent attack on British soil in 2018 targeting a critic of the Russian leader, and again after this year’s invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>The British security services have intensified their counter-espionage work as they try to stop Russian efforts to spy on the UK, and warned publicly of the growing threat.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Arrest: 15yr-old firing shots outside school
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/deputies-arrest-15-year-old-accused-of-firing-shots-outside-everett-high-school-causing-a-lockdown
GIST	<p>EVERETT, Wash. - The Snohomish County Sheriff's Office arrested a 15-year-old accused of firing multiple shots outside Mariner High School in Everett, causing the school to go on lockdown.</p> <p>On June 13, the high school went on lockdown around 3:10 p.m. after shots were reported in the parking lot. School had let out for the day but those who were in the building for after-school activities or sports were on lockdown.</p> <p>According to deputies, the 15-year-old suspect fired at a vehicle. Deputies say the suspect and the victim knew each other.</p> <p>No one was injured.</p> <p>The suspect ran off after firing the shots. Police were able to locate him a day later, about a mile and a half from the high school.</p>

Return to Top	<p>He was sent to Denny Juvenile Justice Center where he was booked for unlawful possession of a firearm, disturbing school activity and possession of a dangerous weapon on school property.</p> <p>The suspect had his initial court appearance on Wednesday and his bail was set at \$250 cash or \$2,500 bondable. He has since posted bail and was released.</p> <p>Earlier this month, another teen was arrested in Snohomish County for allegedly making threats against Edmonds-Woodway High School. Edmonds police said a 16-year-old student was booked in juvenile jail on suspicion of felony harassment. They also said a realistic-looking BB gun was recovered.</p> <p>Several other students around Puget Sound, including in Kirkland and Tacoma, have been arrested in the last month, accused of making threats to their schools.</p> <p>Law enforcement warns that even as a joke, these threats could lead to felony charges if convicted.</p>
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